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Sam made a great speech in favor of the simple life.

BACK TO NATURE

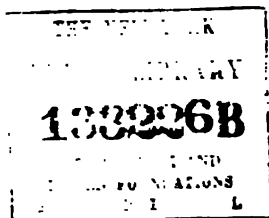
By NEWTON NEWKIRK
(“*NEWT*”)

Illustrations by the Author

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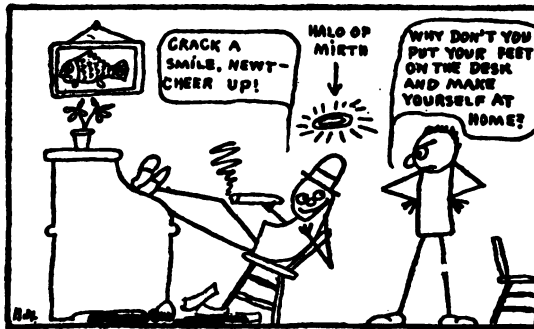
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BACK TO NATURE

CHAPTER I

ONE day early in September Sam Parker drifted into the office, hit me a wallop on the back that nearly made



Sam always makes himself at home when he calls.

me swallow my pipe, pulled up a chair and sitting down leaned back and deposited

N Y V L

his feet on my desk among my private papers. Let me tell you that a fellow has to know me pretty well to take liberties like that with me. There are not very many men who can do things like that to me and get away with it. I always let Sam Parker do pretty much as he pleases with me for several reasons. In the first place, I have known him for years. In the second place I like the big, good-natured slob and in the third place Sam is as strong and husky as a bull moose and could pick me up with one hand and spank me with the other.

Wherever Sam goes he always takes the sunshine with him. That Sam Parker don't worry about nothin'. He seems to think that life is a mess of sofa pillows and in all the time I've known him I never knew him to suffer from a prolonged attack of ingrowing grouch. No matter how fast troubles come over the plate to Sam he'll bat every one of 'em and make a series of three-baggers. Every cloud is silver-lined to Sam. Now, I have a pretty good disposition myself, but I'll admit I can't always wear the

J. P. V. M.

merry ha-ha on my lips. I can make a pretty fair "O be joyful!" average, but I can't keep twittering mirth 365 days a year like Sam can. There are times when my smile sort of fades out—times when my liver buckles and I get on very bad terms with myself and want to kick a cat or dog or something. But to Sam Parker things are never so bad, but that they might be worse. That's why folks like Sam, I reckon. He's the cheerfulest cuss that ever came down the pike. You can say what you please, but the world likes the chap who can wear the smile that won't come off—the smile that is all wool and a yard wide, warranted fast color and not to fade and run when adversity roosts on the hearthstone. Misery may love company, but what company loves misery? Laugh and the world laughs with you, but carry your face in a sling and people will go seven miles out of their way to avoid you.

As Sam sat there smoking my tobacco we got to talking about vacation. Sam asked me what plans I had on tap for my next

outing and I told him I guessed I'd hit the trail soon for a few weeks at my camp on the shore of an inland Maine lake, so I asked him to go along and batch it with me. Now, Sam knows what my camp is, for he and I have had some good times there in the past. Also he knows it is a good camp, well furnished and tight and snug to live in comfortably. I was a good deal surprised when Sam shook his head and said:

"Nix on the luxurious life for me, Newt — I'm sick of it. The next time I hit the trail I'm goin' away back into the tall and uncut — I'm goin' to beat it away back into the wild and woolly woods and get next to nature. That's the only way to do if you want to get big dividends on your vacation. The trouble with sports nowadays is that they've been spoiled by too many camp comforts. We've got so accustomed to steam heat and bath rooms and electric lights and all the other modern conveniences that when a man goes into the woods he gets peevish unless he's got a roof over his head and an Ostermoor under him. I have a theory that

when a fellow takes a vacation he ought to live the life of a primitive man — the life of a savage. He ought to be willing to take a few jolts, endure a few hardships and live by the skin of his teeth for a while. If he lives like an Indian it will teach him self-reliance, resourcefulness, courage, and he will come back to town as husky as a bear and as tough as a nut. No camp comforts for me, Newt. The next joy-jault I go on I'm going to live the simple life."

"What you call the simple life," says I, "sounds a good deal to me, Sam, like the foolish life and yet you may be right. I've never tried living from hand to mouth like you talk about, but somehow or other the idea doesn't sound so bad. If I could take a trip like that and come back home with muscles sticking out all over me like knots on a tree and with a digestion that would get away with wire nails without giving me the tummy ache, I'd feel that my time had been well spent. Just what's on your mind — except your hair?"

"Now I'll tell you what we'll do," says

Sam when he found I was interested; "about week after next we'll dust out of town and fetch up at Northeast Carry, which is at the top of Moosehead Lake. We'll outfit at the Carry and follow the West Branch of the Penobscot down to Chesuncook and Caribou Lakes. Possibly we'll take a side trip to the top of Mt. Katahdin some morning before breakfast and —"

"But what do you know about that neighborhood," I butts in; "ever been there?"

"No," says Sam, "but I've been peeroosin' maps of that section until I know every inch of it by heart. I've studied the maps of that region so much that I could go anywhere around there blindfolded and with my hands tied behind me."

Well, we chewed it over for a spell and finally shook hands on a back-to-nature trip. Sam told me to leave the details to him and be ready to start on the first of the second week in September.

Every day or two Sam would come butting into the office to report progress in plan-

ning the trip. He was as enthusiastic over our back-to-nature campaign as a kid is over his first pair of pants and it wasn't long until I caught the spirit. It was agreed that the only duffle we would take from Boston would consist of our fishing rods, a rifle each, a small tent for two and a few — very few — personal belongings. We would proceed to Northeast Carry at the top of Moosehead Lake and outfit there before leaving civilization behind us.

Well, at 2 A. M. on a foggy September morning we met at the North Station and boarded the Portland train. That was a sweet time of night to start on a vacation, now wasn't it? But Sam said we had to do it in order to catch the early morning train from Portland to Kineo. Sam had bought our tickets and a couple of berths in the sleeper.

The best he could get was one upper and one lower. As soon as the train pulled out we decided we would retire so as to get a few winks before our arrival in Portland where we were told the sleeper would lie in

the railroad yard until 7 o'clock so that the sleeping car passengers could get the worth of their money.

"Which is my berth?" says I kind of inquisitive like to Sam as we went along the



An early morning controversy over the choice of berths.

aisle. Sam, he takes the coupons out of his vest pocket, looks at 'em for a minute then he says, "Why, yours is the upper berth, Newt — now ain't that too bad!" "Yes," says I, "it would be too bad if it was true — you look at them coupons again and I think you'll find that my berth is the lower one." Sam looks again. "No," says he,

"I was right the first time — yours is the upper." "If you think I'm goin' to sleep away up on that little measly two by four shelf," says I, "you're mistaken a whole lot." Then I sat in the lower berth and began taking off my shoes. "Didn't I buy the tickets?" says Sam; "and oughtn't I to have first choice?" "I'm goin' to sleep in the lower berth," says I, "because I'm the smallest and you ought to give up to me." "That's the very reason you ought to take the upper berth," says Sam; "it's the smallest and will fit you better — go ahead, Newt. Be a sport and sleep in the upper berth, that's a nice little boy." "You go ahead and be the sport," says I. "You ought to be ashamed of yourself, you great big bully, tryin' to work that bum upper berth off on me." "Oh, well," says Sam, "if you're goin' to be mean and show your nasty disposition, why I'll sleep in the upper berth. But I always thought you had a little politeness — I never knew you was a dog-goned swine. Go ahead and sleep in the lower berth. I

have my failings, but I thank goodness I'm still a gentleman."

"I won't let anybody call me a swine," says I; "if you feel that way about it, go ahead and take the lower berth and I'll sleep in the upper." "No, you won't," says Sam, "because I'm goin' to sleep in the upper." "You're not either," says I. "I am too," says Sam. "We'll see," says I. "Well, we will see," says Sam. "You wanted the lower berth," says I, "and now you've got to take it." "I wouldn't sleep in the lower berth now," says Sam, "not for a thousand dollars." "I wouldn't sleep in it for a million," says I; "if I can't have the upper berth I won't have any—I'll sit in the smoking compartment until morning, so there!"

"Aw shut up your fool heads and go to sleep!" says a man down the aisle sticking his head out between the curtains; "do you want to wake up everybody in the car!" "That's what I say," hollers another passenger at the other end of the car; "you

fellows must think this is a debating society! ”

Sam and I quieted down some and finally Sam proposed that we'd match pennies to see who would sleep in the upper berth. This seemed fair, so we matched and I got the upper berth. I never did have any luck as a gambler. Sam laughed until he nearly shook the car off the track. I stood there wondering how I was going to get into the upper berth when a man just across the aisle stuck out his head to see what the fun was and stepping on his head I vaulted lightly into the upper berth and began to undress. “Thank you, sir,” I says to the man whose head I stepped on, but I'd hate to tell you in print what he said to me.

I had a fierce time getting my clothes off. You undress in an upper berth like you peel a banana. I got my shirt half over my head, stuck fast in it and nearly smothered to death. In my struggles I sat up and like to have butted my brains out against the car roof. “Don't do that,” says Sam when he heard the thud, “you'll knock the varnish off the ceiling.”

And when I did finally get undressed I couldn't go to sleep. I was afraid to go to sleep for fear I would be jolted out of the berth. From the way the car bounced around I judged that the train had left the track and was cutting across the fields. Sam was asleep in about five minutes — I could hear him sleeping soundly. Presently I rang for the porter and when he arrived I says, "Porter, kindly speak to the man in the berth under me and tell him not to snore so hard." The porter then shook Sam and says, "'Scuse me, Boss, but de gemmen in de upper berth asks yo' kindly not to snoah so loud, sah."

You should have heard Sam swear; I'm ashamed to tell you where he told the porter to tell the "gemmen in de upper berth" to go. After Sam got to sleep again I rang for the porter a second time and giving him a half dollar told him to wake Sam up every half hour until daylight and to ask him each time not to snore so loud. After the porter had awakened Sam twice he sneaked back to me and handing me back the half dollar

said he was a married man and had a family depending on him and that if it was all the same to me he guessed he wouldn't wake up the "gemmen in de lower ag'in, sah." I



I got more than fifty cents worth of fun out of it.

told the porter to keep the half dollar and tried to go to sleep. About the time the train arrived in Portland and was side-tracked in the yard I drifted off into slumber, but not for long.

I was awakened by an awful jolt that drove me against the headboard hard enough to fracture my skull. I saw all kinds of stars. From 5 to 7 A.M. a yard

engine kept playing buttin'-buttin'-who's-got-the buttin' with our car all over the yard.

It switched us back and forth from one track to the other until there wasn't a closed eye in the whole car. It would let us lie quiet on a side track for a few minutes until

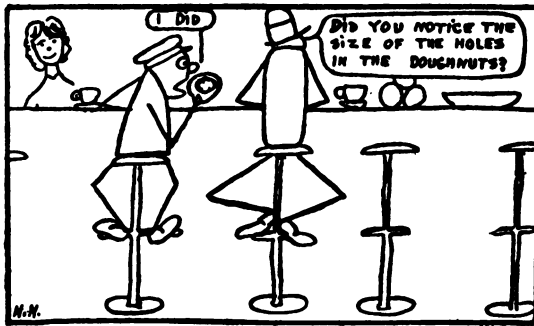


When Sam entered the wash-room he was temporarily sore.

everybody would be dozing, then it would back off, sneak up, and biff! — everybody would be telescoped. I asked the porter what in blazes they were trying to do. The porter said that he reckoned it was because some folks couldn't sleep in a sleeping car unless it was moving.

Well, about 6 A. M. I got up and was half dressed when Sam came into the wash room carrying his clothes.

"Hullo, partner," says I, "how did you sleep in the lower berth last night?" "Aw, go to grass," says Sam; "where's that por-



We had to pay for the doughnut holes whether we ate them or not.

ter?" "What do you want of the porter?" says I. "Oh, nothin' much," says Sam; "I only want to kill him — that's all."

After we had a piping hot breakfast at the Portland Union Station we both felt better, although we surely did have to pay for everything we ate. How about five cents

for a single doughnut, that is only one-fourth doughnut and three-fourths hole? You have to pay for the hole whether you eat it or not. Perhaps they use the left over holes to frame doughnuts on again, I don't know. Coffee was ten cents per cup and it wasn't



Contemplating Mt. Kineo from the Moosehead
Lake Steamer.

very strong, vigorous coffee at that. One boiled egg was fifteen cents. Gee, I'd think after paying fifteen cents for one egg a hen would be ashamed to meet me on the street.

Well, we got the train for Kineo all right and settling ourselves in the smoker burned up good tobacco by the pipeful as the train

sped on northward. The day passed very pleasantly and about 3 P.M. we landed at Kineo Station, on Moosehead Lake where there was a passenger steamer in waiting to transport us on up the lake to Northeast Carry. Mt. Kineo is one of the features of this trip. This mountain is left behind shortly after the steamer leaves and for miles afterward you see its tall summit rising abruptly from the lake.

It was about 6 P.M. when we left the steamer at Northeast Carry with appetites like a couple of goats and what we did to the hotel grub was a plenty. After supper we let out our belts a couple of notches and went to the supply store where we outfitted for our trip into the wilds on which we were scheduled to start next morning.

CHAPTER II

WE found in that store everything from a fish-hook to a bale of hay — but, of course, we didn't buy any bales of hay. Jackasses we may have been, but we were not going to live on timothy or clover.

Sam acted as purchasing agent, but I told him what to buy. He listened to me patiently, then bought what he pleased. I kept gently suggesting that we add this or that to our list. There were some canned fruits that looked especially good to me and which I thought ought to be added to the outfit, also some sweet cakes done up in attractive packages and seedless raisins all of which I told Sam would go good when we were far from home and mother. Finally Sam bristled up, and says, "Newt, you give me an excruciating pain in the neck. This is not a Sunday school picnic, it's a rough-and-tumble tour. If you think we're going to

have meals in courses like they serve on a Pullman dining car, you're mistaken. If you think we're going to take along canned pineapples from the Sandwich Islands and potted hummingbirds' tongues, your thinker is out of joint. My boy, we're only going to take along the bare and nude necessities of life — and not even an overdose of those. The luxuries we'll cut out, see? You seem to forget that we're going to live like primitive men. This is a next-to-nature jaunt and not a personally conducted Cook's tour with a delicatessen lunch-wagon on the side. You leave the buying to me and go play at twiddling your fingers."

"All right," says I, "if you think you have a corner on all the horse-sense in the world, go on and buy whatever you dog-gone please, but if you run out of grub don't blame me! If you wake up in camp some morning and find there isn't a bite to eat in the house and I rise up and exclaim, 'I told you so!' take it kindly, won't you?"

"You leave it to me," says Sam. "We'll get our living chiefly from the woods and

waters just like the Indians used to do. In other words we'll wrest our sustenance from nature like the birds and the wild creatures."

So I shut up like a clam and let Sam have his way. I didn't even pay any attention to what he bought, but after he had shopped for a couple of hours he told me he had purchased everything we needed. I took his word for it and we went to bed.

Sam had made some inquiries about the purchase of a canoe and next morning we hunted up a chap who, we understood, had a second-hand twenty-footer he might sell. He was a long-coupled fellow who ate tobacco alive.

Sam opened negotiations as follows:

"Mornin', stranger."

"Mornin'."

"I reckon you don't know of anybody who has a canoe for sale."

"Waal, I got one, but I'm not partickler about sellin' it."

"I ain't partickler about buyin' one either, but I just thought I'd ask you."

"Second-hand canoes is purty skeerce up in this neck o' woods."

"Well, that don't matter when a fellow ain't huntin' for one."

"No, I reckon not."

"How long is your canoe?"

"Twenty feet."

"Is it around handy?"

"There it is down on the beach."

"Don't mind if I look at it, do you?"

"Gosh no —'twon't do it no hurt to look at it."

We all walked down, turned the canoe over and inspected it closely.

"And so you don't want to sell it, eh?" says Sam.

"I ain't partickler sinst you don't want to buy it."

"I reckon you'd sell it if you could get your price for it?"

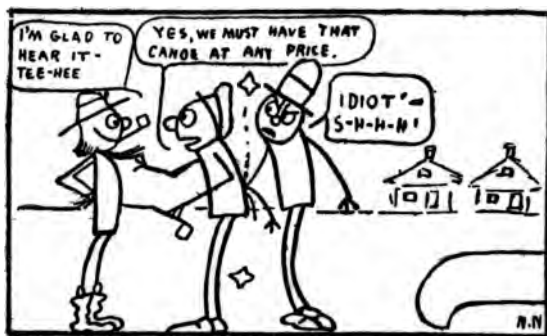
"Yes, I reckon I would."

"What do you ask for it?"

Before the man who owned the canoe could reply I, who up to now had kept my trap closed, says:

"We've got to have that canoe, Mister, no matter what it costs."

The look Sam gave me chilled me to the bone. His face plainly said that he'd like to kick the seat of my pants up my back until



I got called down for trying to help make the trade.

it would hang from my collar button behind. The man hemmed and hawed and finally says he:

"Wall, by rights I ought to have fifty dollars for that canoe and them two paddles, but bein's it's you I'll take thirty-five dollars."

You should have heard Sam laugh. He told the man he could get canoes like that at home for thirty-five dollars a dozen. Sam found so much fault with the canoe that I began to think that he wouldn't accept it as a gift. The way he ran it down led me to believe that if the man should suddenly offer it to him as a present he (Sam) would be insulted and want to fight. So I was a good deal surprised when Sam says:

"It's just like throwing money away, but I'll tell you what I'll do — I'll give you twenty-five dollars for that canoe and not a red cent more."

Then the man said he'd take thirty-three dollars and would die before he'd take a cent less.

Sam then said he'd give him twenty-eight dollars and would perish by slow starvation before he would go above that. The man took several oaths as to what he'd do before he'd take a penny less for the canoe, all the while coming down in his price, while Sam, as he gradually raised the offer swore by all the

great horn-spoons that it was the last copper he would give. Finally both buyer and seller met at thirty dollars and Sam paid for the canoe and took possession.

"Say, that was a great bargain," I whispers to Sam as we mosied off.

"Bargain!" snaps Sam. "If you'd kept that pie-face of yours shut I'd have got that canoe for twenty dollars. Just when I was gettin' him down to a wholesale figure you have to butt in that we must have the canoe at any price. What did you do that for — want him to think you're John Rockefeller and I'm Pierp. Morgan? That unruly tongue of yours cost us just ten bucks, that's all!"

"Well," says I, "the reason I spoke up is because I didn't want to see you rob the fellow. You see, Sam, you're so dog-goned clever at driving a bargain that you'd have skun that chap out of his eye teeth if I hadn't interfered."

"Let me say to you," says Samuel, "that when you skin anybody trading up in this country you've got to get up in the morn-

ing before the frost is melted off the roof. But even at that I do think we got a bargain — that's a rippin' good canoe for the money we paid."

Next we got into our hunting togs and hired a horse and wagon to take our canoe and duffle across the carry to the West



Ever try to ride a canoe, bottom side up, in
a wagon?

Branch of the Penobscot. We also took with us a lunch to prevent the bother of going ashore at noon.

The road across to the river is about two miles long and as straight as a string. The driver pointed out a spot where an albino

deer had been frequently seen that summer and he allowed if it hung around there until the law went off it would get its everlast-in'.

Bye and bye we came to the river where we unloaded our stuff and paid the teamster, who drove off bidding us good-bye and wishing us good luck. We placed the canoe near the shore where we could launch it easily and then packed our duffle in it. This done Sam pushed the craft into the river and told me to sit flat in the bottom ahead of the duffle and he would paddle stern. He said the current looked fairly swift in spots and that one paddle would be enough. So we stowed ourselves away and pushed off into the current.

It was a great morning on which we began our journey so auspiciously, but sometimes auspicious beginnings have bad endings. The sun was shining bright and warm. A playful breeze was rippling the water and whispering in the foliage that lined the river on either side. The birds were singing joyously as if they didn't care a hang if they

did bust a lung. Overhead clouds of cotton drifted by against a sky of purest blue. Now and then a frog from the bank would salute us in a guttural voice as we drifted



Talk about your poetry of motion — here it is.

by or an awkward bumblebee would bumble over us, poise an instant to look us over and then go zig-zagging on his way in search of nectar from the heart of the flowers. As we rounded the first turn three black ducks went up and heading down stream for a distance rose above the trees and circled back over our heads so low that we could hear the whirr of their wings.

I loaded my pipe to the muzzle, lighted

it and leaning back comfortably against the duffle lapsed into a happiness unspeakable — unspeakable because it seemed a shame to profane that drowsy solitude by anything as vulgar as mere conversation. At last we were moving toward the great heart of nature — drifting idly with the current into the brooding wild to nestle in the bosom of the wilderness.

“Isn’t this great!” says Sam with a happy sigh as he expelled the ozone from his lungs.

“You bet your boots!” says I.

“This beats working in a stuffy old city office — what?”

“Beats it by a hundred miles,” says I.

It was all I could do to keep from breaking forth in a loud, derisive chortle when I realized I was out here in the open drifting along a peaceful river instead of sitting at a desk in a big city building with my tired head in one hand and a pen in the other trying to think up something to write about. I settled myself more comfortably and closed my eyes. I think I dozed off for a minute or two. At any rate I dreamed I

was floating down a river somewhere, but not in a canoe. No, it seemed there was nothing whatever between me and the water — I appeared to be idly floating on the surface in a sitting posture which, of course, is absurd because no man will float on top of water like a life preserver.

Suddenly I was awakened by Sam's voice calling my attention to a muskrat swimming along the shore. After the animal had thrust its tail into the air by way of a parting salute, and had disappeared with a kersplosh, my thoughts returned to my dream, which was still fresh on the retina of my mental vision, so to speak. The more I thought of that dream the more truth than fiction there seemed to be in it. In fact it seemed to be so real that I couldn't help shifting my position so as to see under me. The next instant I sprang to my feet with such violence that I nearly overturned the canoe.

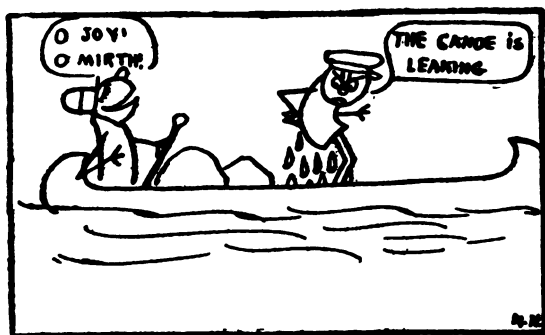
I had been sitting in four inches of water!

"What's the matter?" bawls Sam.

"Matter!" says I. "This ding-busted

canoe leaks! — Look at me and then ask what's the matter! ”

The backs of my trousers from top to bottom were dripping. Sam let out a yell of



I discovered my pants were wet clear up my back.

mirth, that went echoing up and down the river. It tickled him nearly to death to see me standing there leaking like a sieve.

“Go ahead and laugh,” says I in the meanest voice I could think of; “Go ahead and laugh — it only shows how ill-bred you are! It's no laughing matter when the only pair of pants I've got to my name is in soak!”

Then Sam laughed harder than ever. I thought I would make him pause in his merriment so I says:

"You're a fine trader, ain't you? Thought you got a bargain in this canoe, but you got stung, didn't you? 'Most any country yap can pull the wool over your eyes. You never thought of setting the canoe into the water to see if it leaked, did you? This old scow's worth about thirty cents and yet you paid thirty real dollars for it."

Then Sam stopped laughing and began to cuss the fellow who sold him the canoe while I continued to rub it into him. Sam called the man some names that I wouldn't take from anybody. I told Sam he'd better talk in a lower tone, or his voice might carry back and if the man heard what he was saying he would follow and lick us both.

Well, the long and short of it was that we had to go ashore, unload everything, dump out the water, turn up the canoe, wait for the wind and sun to dry it, then treat some abrasions which we found on the bottom with a canoe repairing outfit which we

brought with us. We found that the water had soaked our blankets which had been on the bottom, but had wet nothing else. When we got the canoe fixed it was past



Here is a case where I got a strike on the back cast.

noon, so we ate our lunch before we again embarked and continued on down river.

I had seen one or two trout turn hand-springs out of the water after flies which had fallen on the surface, so after we had started on our way again I strung up my fly-rod, soaked a fly leader and bent on a small "Seth Green" which seemed to match as near as anything I had in my book, the

color of insects which I saw on the surface. I figured if we could pick up enough speckled beauties for supper as we drifted on our way, it would be just like casting our bread upon the waters and having it come back to us with butter and molasses on.

By this time the river had narrowed up some and the current was becoming quite swift. Also we could tell by the way the water acted that at some points the rocks were not far under the surface. After I made a few idle casts to get distance and limber up the rod which was a little split bamboo of a thing, so delicate and sensitive that it was like a straw in the wind, I says to Sam:

"See the top of that old sunken stump ahead there to the left?"

"Yep," says Sam.

"Well," says I, "there's a two pounder in the eddy just below that stump and we'll have him for supper — how do you like your trout, fried or broiled?"

Without waiting for Sam to answer I took up the back cast and with a professional

elbow movement combined with a dexterous twist of the wrist gracefully laid the "Seth Green," not into the eddy below the stump, but into the stump itself where it stuck fast and tight.

"Stop the canoe!" I yells, "can't you see my fly's fast!"

"Stop nothin'," say Sam. "How in blazes do you expect me to stop the canoe in this water!"

"Go ashore!" I hollers.

"What — into them rocks? Well, I guess nix!"

"You'll break my riggin'!" says I, standing up in the canoe.

"Sit down you — you ijit! Sit down or I'll hit you a wallop over the coco with the canoe paddle!"

"You hit me and I'll upset the canoe!" threatens I.

"You upset the canoe and I'll drown you!" says Sam.

Thus the tedium of the voyage was enlivened by bright and sparkling bits of repartee.

Meanwhile the canoe had shot past the stump and was speeding on its way. The reel was singing a solo in a high key as the line paid off. I like the song of the reel, but not under these circumstances, because I didn't know what would happen when we came to the end of the line. If it broke at the reel core, farewell to seventy-five yards of good silk!

I pointed the rod straight back so when the tug came the pull would be direct from the reel. Presently the line came taut and I shut my eyes. I felt a pull on the rod, then something gave and I opened my peepers. Thank goodness the line didn't break near the rod, for there it came trailing along behind. I reeled in and discovered to my delight that the snell of the fly only had broken, so that my line and leader were saved.

Sam was laughing. I gave him a contemptuous look and then went to work putting on a new fly.

"Newt," says Sam, "you played that old stump in great shape. I've seen fishermen

bring to net water-logged limbs, old rubber boots and empty salmon cans, but you're the first sport I ever saw who tried to land a half-ton sunken stump in swift water on a six-ounce fly rod."

"Oh, you go to grass!" says I, then I began to cast again but not — I say not, in the direction of any stumps. Sam kept chuckling away behind me, but I didn't pay any attention to him. Then suddenly the fly caught on something and Sam hollered "Ouch!" in a loud and earnest tone. I looked around quickly to discover that it was Sam the fly had caught on as I went to make a forward cast. It seems the hook had dug into his left ear and then into his felt hat. Anyhow I had his hat on the end of the line. It had fallen into the water and was coming along on top at a great rate.

"Look here," says Sam in a nasty sharp-edged tone, "if you can't throw a fly without hookin' the best friend you've got in the ear, you'd better unjoint that rod and contemplate the scenery. First you have an

old stump rise to the fly and next you try to give me the hook! You might have put my eye out then. Where did you learn to cast a fly anyhow — from a correspondence school?"

It was my turn to laugh now and I made the most of it. I kept on casting for a while, but there was nothing doing and as the water was getting swifter every minute, I laid aside the rod and took up the paddle. Sam told me to look sharp ahead for rocks and if I saw any near the surface to keep the bow off. I felt keenly the responsibility of my position as I squatted in the bow of our graceful craft with paddle poised looking for trouble, as it were, so I could side-step it. There is an exhilaration about cruising in swift water — an exhilaration that at times borders on panic. My nerves were strung up like fiddle strings as we shot down the river just missing a rock here and nearly hitting one there. My eyes bulged out like a beetle's, I could feel my hair pushing up my hat and my forehead was perspiring freely. Nothing was said as we bounced

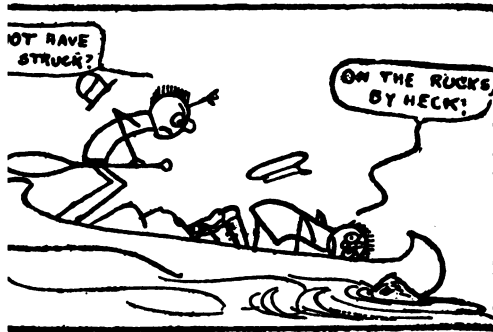
along. It was not a time for idle conversation and superfluous observations.

Suddenly, dead ahead, I saw two boulders about two feet apart waiting for us just beneath the surface. We were heading straight for them and were going some, too. I realized that whatever was done must be done quickly — there was no time to lose. Here was an instance where it was out of the question for Sam and I to go into executive session to leisurely discuss ways and means of avoiding those rocks.

I stuck my paddle into the current clean to the hilt and tried to pry the bow to one side at the same time yelling at the top of my lungs, "Hard aport!" If I had kept my mouth shut the canoe would have cleared the rocks and swung past O. K., but when Sam got the pilot's message, he dug his blade into the foam and swung the stern over just enough to counteract what I had done.

The next instant the bow of the canoe shot between those two rocks like a wedge — and stuck solid and tight. The jar when we stopped in our tracks threw me

ard. In others words the canoe
ed, but I went on and fell in such a way
a thwart of the canoe hit me a whack
across the bridge of my nose. I had
ion of more fireworks than I ever saw



ight between the two rocks we went and
stuck fast with a jolt.

ny July Fourth. At first I thought my
had been broken — but it was merely
ured and bleeding.
s soon as I could get right side up I
ed back to see what had become of Sam.
had been thrown forward on the duffle
was just getting into position again.
e we were tight and fast between the

rocks with the water boiling past us. Sam sat there glaring at me a minute, then he says in a voice I didn't like, "Did I understand you to say, 'hard aport'!" "Them was my exact remarks," says I in a cold distant tone. Then Sam told me what kind of a sailor he thought I was — the kind of a sailor that ought to have a license to run a boat on a lake of fire.

"Do you know which is the port side of a canoe?" says Sam.

"Ha-ha!" says I, making light of his question, "do I know the port side of a canoe! Course I do."

"Well, which side is the port side?"

"Why, it's the side opposite the starboard side."

"And which is the starboard side?"

"Look here," says I becoming very much out of patience, "this is no time or place for me to give you your first lesson in nautical terms. I didn't come on this trip to teach a big, ignorant landlubber marine matters. If you don't know 'port' from 'starboard' you ought to be ashamed of yourself.

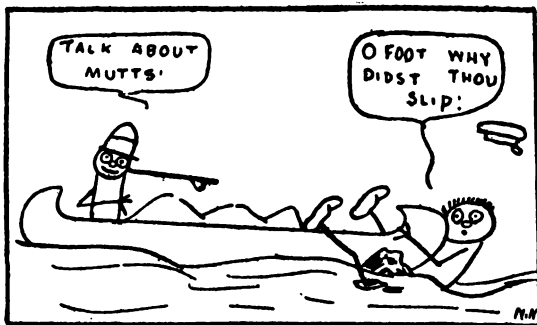
That, however, isn't the question — the question is how are we going to get out of this mess you've got us into. Are we going to stay here in the middle of the river all afternoon and all night?"

"No — we're not," says Sam; "you're going to get out on those rocks and push the canoe off." "Indeed!" says I. "And who said so, may I ask?"

Well, we argued the question quite a spell, and finally just to show that I was a martyr I said I would extricate the canoe.

Both those boulders were about three inches under water and the water was cold as ice cream soda. Finally I managed to get a foot planted on each rock, seized the canoe and began to push. At the third grunt, my right foot slipped and I went into the water above my middle. Sam whooped, and hollered, and yelled, and laughed. He said he never enjoyed anything so much in his life and asked me if I'd do it over again. I scrambled back on the rocks and finally managed to loosen the canoe and as the stern swung round I jumped into the bow and

nearly swamped the whole outfit. I wouldn't have cared much if I had. It would have made me happy to see Sam soaked.



The stones on which I stood were slippery.

It wasn't far below this point that we struck quiet water and began spying about for a place to camp. I felt cold and clammy and wanted a chance to dry out, so we finally went ashore where a little brook came into the river. I collected some driftwood and soon had a roaring fire while Sam pitched the tent. As it was to be only a

one-night's stand and the weather was fair we pulled out the canoe and left most of the duffle in it.

I took off my boots, socks, trousers and drawers to dry them by the fire. Sam said I looked like a Chinaman as I stood before the fire clad in my shirt, hat and pipe. I



I was soon to find out what Sam was laughing at.

may have looked like a Chinaman, but I felt like an Esquimo in January. There was a cold draught of wind blowing up the river and as I stood there by the fire, bare-legged, I shivered so I couldn't talk without

stuttering and I nearly bit my pipe-stem in two.

As Sam pottered about I noticed a broad grin on his face. "What are you laughing at?" says I. "Oh, you'll know in a few minutes," says he. "I'll be glad of it," says



Lowering the world's record for a fifty-yard dash.

I, "because then I can laugh, too." "You won't be glad of it and you won't laugh either," says Sam. While I stood there in my shirt with my back to the fire puzzling over what Sam was laughing at, I turned around to warm my shins, and let my calves cool, when there, drifting down the river

opposite us came two canoes with three people in each, two of whom were LADIES!

I gave one jump into the air and nearly came down in the fire. Soon as I lit I made a mad dash into the brush, and was just going to dodge behind the nearest tree when I stubbed my foot on a log and fell headlong into the weeds where I lay groaning. I could hear the men in the canoes laughing and I blushed with shame to hear the giggles of the ladies also. I overheard one of the guides say, "No, we don't very often see a critter like that up in this country." Then there was more laughter as the camping party drifted on down river out of sight and hearing.

When I walked back to the fire I found Sam doubled up with mirth. He was holding his side and the tears were rolling down his cheeks.

"Why didn't you tell me there were ladies present?" says I.

"'Cause I didn't want to spoil the picture," says Sam; "you looked too cute for anything when you hiked into the woods."

Then Sam roared again.

"Aw, you give me a pain in my modesty,"
says I. Then I pulled on my pants.

CHAPTER III

THE recollection of our first repast in the wilderness sticks in my memory like a cocklebur in a pup's tail. Sam got the supper—what there was of it. He took some flour and doped it with soda



Sam's a good bread mixer—he mixed up everything around camp with the dough.

and cream of tartar, then he added enough water to make dough of it. This he kneaded and mauled and walloped around

in a pan until it was in a state of exhaustion. I watched the operation with a critical eye. As he kneaded the dough he kept smoking his pipe and the ashes from the pipe fell into the dough which I don't suppose helped it any.

"By the time that dough rises until it's ready to bake we'll both be suffering some from the pangs of hunger," says I.

"Rises!" says Sam. "Rises! — Ha-ha! — listen to the tenderfoot talk! Do you suppose I'm going to wait for this dough to rise? This is ready-to-bake dough and in a few minutes I'll give you some of the finest bread you ever sank your fangs into."

"Well," says I, "I've seen my mother bake bread many a time and she always let the dough rise over night — and my mother was one of the finest bakeresses who ever clapped an oven door shut."

"Unless you want to make me sore," says Sam, "don't begin to remind me of the kind of bread your mother used to bake. You talk like a newly married man to his bride, you do!"

"Are you going to bake it in a pan?" says I, changing the subject.

"Pan!" says Sam. "Confound it, can't you get your mind off civilization for a few minutes! Did primitive man have any bake-



Here is a life-like illustration of what is called eating bread off the limb.

ans? Did the Indians bake their bread in pans? Are we going to be hampered in our back-to-nature trip by modern methods of cookery? Not much! I'm going to bake this bread like the old ginks of the Stone Age baked their bread. Did the old Stone Agers have any bake-pans? Well, I guess nit! Now, don't ask me any more

fool questions, but keep your eye on the cook and you'll find out how to bake bread without pans that'll melt in your mouth."

Sam then laid the dough on a log and cut a couple of green beech sticks about four feet long and three inches thick. Next he grabbed up the dough, but in his haste it slipped out of his hand and fell into the sand. With a low, eloquent curse he picked it up, brushed it off as best he could and divided it in two batches. Taking each batch separately he pulled it out like taffy and wrapped it spirally about the beech sticks from end to end. Then he propped up the beech sticks close to the fire and set the dough baking. He told me as the dough browned to keep turning the sticks and he got busy making the coffee.

"Make it strong," says I; "if there's anything I despise it's wishy-washy, weak coffee. I'd rather drink water than the kind of coffee you get by tying a coffee bean to a string and letting the shadow of it fall on a quart of boiling water."

By the time the coffee was ready Sam said the bread was done.

I went down to the river to wash my hands, but before I had dried them on my handkerchief Sam hollered that supper was ready.

"Gee," says I to myself, "that Sam is a lightning quick lunch artist."

Well, when I returned Sam handed me a beech-stick-with-the-bread-on-it, also a quart measure of coffee.

"I thought you said supper was ready?" says I with an air of inquiry.

"It is," says Sam.

"Where is it?" says I.

"You've got it in your fists," says Sam.

"Don't we get anything but bread and coffee?" says I.

"Certainly not," says Sam. "What do you expect — a porterhouse steak and mushrooms? What did primitive man live on? He lived on maize and roots and berries and what game and fish he could trap or spear. Often he subsisted for weeks on nothing but Indian meal. Newt, I'm afraid that you're

expectin' too much on this trip — I'm afraid you wasn't cut out to rough it and endure hardship and I'm sorry, too, because when I asked you to come along I thought you would be game to the core. There were a lot of chaps wanted to come, but I says to myself, 'Newt's the only pardner for me on a back-to-nature trip.' But here you go kicking about the first meal we've had — even before you've tasted it — I tell you it's too bad."

When Sam talked like that it sort of touched me. I didn't want him to think I was showing the white feather, or the yellow streak.

"You wrong me, Sam," says I. "You wrong me and cut me to the quick besides. Far be from me to be a quitter. Your first impression of me was right — I'm one of the gamest fellows that ever come down the pike. Why, I come from a family of regular game cocks, I do. I'm not kicking — all I intimated was that for a couple of hungry primitive men bread and coffee are not what you might call

a very extensive menu. You can get bread and coffee, you know, in any first-class penitentiary."

Then we fell to and began to eat. Sam broke his bread off the beech, but I gnawed mine right off the stick like you eat corn from the cob. The outside crust was very good, but inside it was all dough. I heard Sam's teeth grit and looked up just in time to see him spit out a mouthful of pebbles. Presently I bit into a pocket of sand, but rather than complain I gnashed my teeth on it awhile and then swallowed bread, sand and all. Some claim that sand is good for you and aids digestion, but I never could see that the sand I ate on that occasion helped me any.

And the coffee! Sam got it strong enough, all right—he certainly gave me just what I asked for. It tasted a good deal like concentrated lye. It was so strong it nearly ate the enamel off my teeth. I like my coffee strong but not so strong that a nail will float in it.

"Is the coffee too weak?" says Sam.

"No," says I; "it's plenty strong enough for me — is it for you?"

"I think I got it a little too strong," says Sam. I didn't think anything about it — I knew he got it too strong, but I wasn't going to do any more kicking, so I began drinking it like a martyr. As soon as I would drink a little out of the quart tin, I would fill up the tin with hot water, when Sam wasn't looking. After I had poured about a gallon and a half of hot water into the quart the coffee was just about the right strength.

Sam ate all of his bread and said it was great, but I ate only about a yard of mine — sand, gravel, tobacco ashes and all. I wasn't very greedy for it.

"There is more nutrition in that bread," says Sam, "than in four pounds of roast beef."

"That may be," says I, "but if anybody should happen along with a couple of pounds of roast beef I'd swap what bread I have left for it mighty quick, I'll tell you those."

About twilight we got into the canoe and drifted down the river casting for trout.

For our pains we got two nice ones for breakfast which we dressed and laid aside.

It was about 9 o'clock when we built up the fire again and turned in for the night. When I laid down on the balsam I discovered that the blanket which had been soaked by the leaky canoe was still quite moist and clammy. I asked Sam if his blanket was wet. He said it was, but he didn't mind.

"Take a primitive man, for instance," says Sam; "now he didn't have any blanket at all, let alone a wet one — he laid down at night and went to sleep on the damp ground and woke up in the morning feeling as fine as a fiddle."

I didn't say anything, but what I thought was that if Mister Primitive Man slept all night on the damp ground instead of waking up next morning feeling as fine as a fiddle, he probably woke up with a pain in his neck, rheumatics between his shoulder blades and lumbago in the small of his back.

Sam was asleep in less than no time, but I lay there like "Little Bright Eyes" with sleep more than a thousand miles away.

An owl away off in the distant woods was asking questions and getting no answers. He asked the same thing over and over again. All I could make out was, "Who — who — who —?" Who it was or what it was I couldn't learn. After lying there sleepless for half an hour I became aware of a persistent prodding in the back and getting up readjusted a limb that was projecting from the balsam boughs. Then I curled up in the wet blanket again for another round. Presently Sam rolled over against me in his sleep. I dug my elbow into him and pushed him, but he wouldn't budge, or even wake up, so I says to myself, "Very well, then,— if you're going to sleep on my side of the bed, I'll sleep on yours. Then I got up, stepped over him and lay down where he had been.

I had barely got settled until Sam rolled back over against me again, so I moved back to the other side of the tent, but before long Sam followed me up just as if I was his affinity. After I had been up and down a dozen times or more it began to get monot-

onous. I began to think that the bread which Sam had eaten for supper had begun to rise. Bye and bye, however, he quieted down, but still I couldn't go to sleep. On the contrary I lay there in disgust with wide open eyes listening to Sam snoring.

Suddenly it occurred to me that it was the strong coffee that was keeping me awake and that until the effects of it wore off I would probably be unable to sleep a wink. Then I determined to go out and sit by the camp fire, so I arose, but before leaving the tent I gave Sam a vicious kick in the ribs just to show him what I thought of him for being able to sleep like a log while I was unable to sleep a wink.

"Whuh — whuh — what's the matter!" says he, sitting up and rubbing his eyes.

"Nothin'," says I; "why?"

"I thought somebody kicked me," says Sam.

"Aw, go to sleep!" says I and passed out of the tent with my blanket around me. Sam took my advice for the next minute I heard him snoring to beat a bagpipe. I

threw some sticks on the fire, hung my blanket before it to dry, then lighted my pipe and sat down before the blaze to fight it out with the forty horse-power coffee. Every-



I sat beside the camp fire until 2 A.M. and the coffee kept me company.

thing about was as still as death. The wind had died down to nothing and the only sound that broke the silence was the crackling of the wood in the blaze.

I sat before the fire perhaps two hours, perhaps three. At any rate when my head began to nod, I took my blanket which by now was dry and warm, reentered the tent and curling up on the boughs was soon asleep.

It seemed only a few minutes later that somebody shook me roughly and opening my eyes I beheld Sam standing over me.

"Come — turn out — it's after 6 o'clock — we've overslept," says he.

"That's so," says I rubbing my eyes; "I got so much sleep last night that I don't know what to do."

"I wish I could say the same," says Sam; "I didn't sleep well at all last night — Oh, I may have dozed off a couple of times, but I had a bum night of it."

It was hard work for me to keep from telling Sam what I thought of him when he said that. It always makes me tired to hear a fellow snore himself out of breath the whole night through and then say in the morning that he didn't sleep a wink.

There were some embers in the ashes which we soon fanned to a blaze and set about preparing breakfast.

"Where did I put those fish?" says Sam.

"Right under your nose on that log," says I.

"What did you do with 'em?" says Sam.

"I never touched 'em," says I.

"Well, they're not here," says Sam.

"Then they're gone," says I.

"Evidently," says Sam. "I'll bet two cents a thieving mink swiped those trout."



If it hadn't been for the mink we'd had fish
for breakfast—cuss a mink!

"I'll bet four cents you're right," says I. However we made a good breakfast on flap-jacks and bacon. Then we packed the tent, broke camp and set sail again down the river by 7 A. M. with Sam astern while I was bow-paddle.

A couple of miles below our camp site as we silently rounded a bend in the river I

saw a deer standing knee deep in the water near the left shore. I pointed to the deer and turned to Sam who nodded understandingly. The creature was standing with its



Nearer and nearer we noiselessly approached
the buck from the rear.

head from us feeding in the rushes. We couldn't tell whether it was a buck or a doe.

"Let's see how close we can get," I whispers to Sam and he whispers back, "All right." I took in my paddle and let Sam handle the canoe — the current helped some. What little wind there was came from the deer to us. We moved down upon the creature in absolute silence hugging the bank

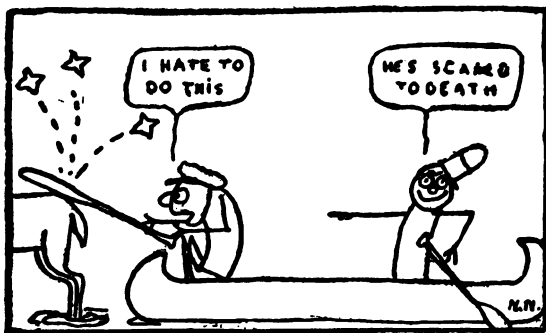
closely and keeping under the overhanging trees as much as possible. Suddenly it lifted its head. We both froze in position while the canoe drifted head on. The animal proved to be a splendid buck with a good head. He looked carelessly about, flicked his tail and then went to feeding again. Evidently he didn't know we were within a hundred miles of him.

Foot by foot the canoe closed up the distance between us and the unsuspecting animal until we were not more than fifty feet off — then twenty-five feet — then fifteen feet. I was wondering if we could get any nearer than fifteen feet, until the canoe closed up the distance to ten — then I began to wonder whether I wanted to get any nearer.

I wasn't nervous, you understand — just a little bit fidgety, that's all. It didn't seem quite right, the way I looked at it, to sneak up behind an innocent, unsuspecting deer in this manner and scare it nearly out of its wits. Now, if this had been a doe instead of a husky buck it wouldn't have mattered so much — a doe never forgets that she is a

lady, but sometimes a buck in close quarters doesn't act like a gentleman. I didn't know but he might take a notion to climb into the canoe with us.

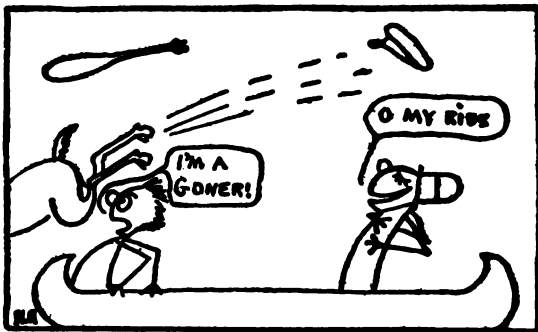
All this time the canoe was gliding straight



I'll bet that buck was surprised when I spanked him with the paddle — so was I!

toward the animal and in one-twentieth of the time it has taken me to write about it, we were literally right up against him. I turned an appealing look at Sam and motioned for him to swing the canoe out into the stream, but the only answer I got was an idiotic grin. The situation was intense. In another second the bow of the canoe would

butt into the buck. I couldn't think of anything better to do, so I raised the paddle high above my head and brought the broad side of it down on the rump of that buck with a resounding whack that smote the stillness



Next time I try to sneak up behind a deer it will be a cold day, a very cold day.

like a shot. It was a good hard spank that I handed to him and he seemed to resent it.

Soon as the paddle struck him the buck's heels went into the air and you'll get an idea of the canoe's proximity to him when I tell you that his hind hoofs kicked my hat off. Lucky for me that they didn't kick my head off. After this salutation the buck bounced

out of the river as if he was on springs and in one jump gained the bank. Then he lit out into the timber in great bounds with his white flag of defiance flying in the breeze. He went so fast that he didn't even stop to 'light between jumps and after he had run himself out of breath he paused and nearly snorted his fool head off in consternation.

When my hat went into the water Sam went into hysterics. He laughed until he was exhausted.

"What'd you want to push me right into 'im for?" says I indignantly.

"Didn't you want to get up as close as you could to him?" says Sam.

"Well," says I, "when I said that I didn't suppose we could get right up on top of him, you chump!"

Having recovered my hat and exchanged these few remarks we paddled on down the river. Three or four miles farther on we came to a party of campers on the river shore.

"Let's stop and pay 'em a fashionable call," says I.

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"What for?" says Sam.

"Oh, just to be neighborly," says I. "All sportsmen are brothers, Sam, and I think it's our duty to go ashore and meet these boys and give 'em the glad hand of fellowship. Don't be such an old grouch. It won't hurt you any to be sociable, will it?"

"Oh, well, all right then, we'll stop," says Sam and he swung the canoe ashore. We both stepped out and walked up to the camp. Two men came forward to greet us. They shook hands cordially and we exchanged names. I asked one of them if they constituted the entire party.

"No," says he, "there are six of us in all — our wives and the two guides."

"Your wives!" says I, and before he could answer two ladies came forward from one of the tents. Sam and I were duly presented to them and when I was introduced, Mrs. Smith (Smith wasn't her name, but it will do) says, "I think I have seen you before."

"Possibly," says I, bowing very low. "It

is more than likely we have met at some social function. Come to think of it, Mrs. Smith, your face now looks quite familiar to me."

Then I was introduced to Mrs. Jones, the other lady. She was a very handsome woman and I hope I may be pardoned for holding her hand a little longer than was necessary.

"I am quite sure I have seen you before, Mr. Newkirk," says Mrs. Jones.

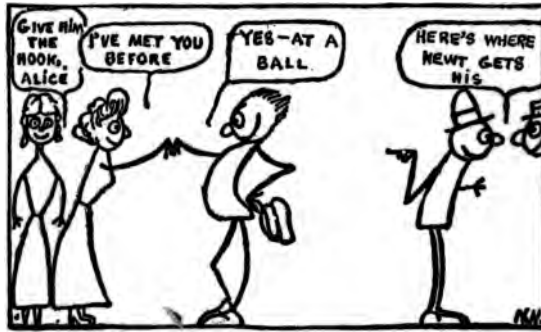
"Ah," says I, "it was at an exclusive ball in Boston that we met, wasn't it? I remember I danced with you several times during the course of the evening and I think I told you then, did I not, Mrs. Jones, that you were positively the most graceful dancer I ever danced with?"

While I held my hat in my hand and dazzled the ladies by my brilliant conversation, the others stood around looking on and smiling; Sam hardly spoke to the ladies at all. Poor Sam! He's a good fellow, of course, but in the presence of ladies, he's a dub and as shy as can be.

"No," says Mrs. Jones, "it wasn't at a ball I first saw you."

"Are you quite sure?" says I.

"Quite," says she, her pretty eyes sparkling merrily and mischievously. "Clarice," she says turning to Mrs. Smith, "and I saw you for the first time last night."



You will observe how much at ease I am when
among ladies.

"Impossible," says I gaily; "you are jesting, ladies."

"You camped just above here last night, did you not?" says Mrs. Smith.

"Yes," says I.

"Well," says she, "when we came down

the river you were standing with your back to the camp fire until you saw us — then you hurried into the woods."

"O Lord!" says I, turning as red as a lobster.

In the last chapter I related how I had taken off my trousers and underwear to dry



Not quite so much at ease as I was in the preceding picture.

them and was standing before the camp fire clad in my shirt, hat and pipe, when a party of six, two of whom were ladies, passed down the river.

Well, these were the ladies!

Everybody howled and Sam laughed loud-

est of all. It was a cool morning, but the perspiration rolled down my face. I couldn't seem to think of anything further to say to the ladies and after twiddling my fingers for a while I went back to the canoe and then hollered to Sam that we must be going if we expected to meet that party at Chesuncook Village.

"Oh, are you going to meet friends at Chesuncook?" says Mrs. Jones.

"Not that I know of, lady," says Sam. "He's only lying so he can get away from here."

"What in thunderation made you want to meet them folks?" says I after we were under way.

"I didn't want to meet 'em," says Sam; "it was you."

"Why didn't you help me out when I lied?" says I.

Sam didn't answer this question. All he says was:

"Met her at a ball!"

Then he laughed so hard he nearly upset the canoe.

CHAPTER IV

WELL, we drifted down the Penobscot Branch in an idle migratory manner until we came to Chesuncook Village. I wanted to stop there and buy some food supplies to add to our store before going further, as it would probably be the last opportunity that we would have, but Sam would not hear to it — he said we already had enough grub for any two men on a “Back to Nature” trip. He told me if I would think more about the good time I was having and less about my stomach, he would appreciate it, and besides that, every time I said we would run out of food, it was a reflection on the judgment of a much more experienced man than myself.

Says I, “All right then, but you remember this, Sam — if we run out of grub, don’t come to me with tears in your eyes and tell me I did not warn you.”

On we pushed into Chesuncook Lake, a beautiful sheet of water, which stretched ahead of us. I said "water" mind you — the water in the lake is all right, but the shore line is punk. In recent years the level of Chesuncook has been raised through artificial means by the lumber interests and so as the water rose, it crept back from the original shore line among the trees, and as a result, thousands of them are dead at the roots. Now, snarl up with these dead trees hundreds of logs which have escaped from booms, together with old driftwood, and you have an idea of the kind of shore which lines Old Chesuncook. These whitened skeletons of trees, interwoven among their dead fellows, and lining a shore which nature fringed with evergreens, make a ghastly appearance. But what does the lumber company care for nature, so long as it can get its hand upon the almighty dollar?

As we paddled into the broad stretch of the lake, leaving the village behind us, a faint chug-chug-chug came to us from away down along, and presently we were able to

pick out in the distance a little steamer owned by some lumber company, which was working her way up, coughing and sputtering and making a great to-do indeed.

"Now, ain't that a nice kind of a chugboat to profane this vast silence?" says I; "how do you expect to get back to nature so long as you are going to meet steamboats with coughs on their lungs like that?"

We passed the noisy little steamer perhaps a half mile distant and continued on along down the east shore of the lake, looking for a place to camp. We saw a lot of places to camp, but the difficulty was in finding a place where we could get the canoe ashore over the dead wood. Finally, we saw a place that looked good and decided to make a try, so we bunted the bow of the craft up over the edge of the driftwood and I, who had been paddling bow, sprang lightly out upon the log, to hold our craft in place. I sprang lightly out and I alighted lightly on the log, which started to turn under my feet at the rate of about 470 revolutions per minute. "What was I doing all

this time if anything?" you ask. I was busy, very busy, trying to keep my equilibrium on top of that log while it rolled and rolled beneath my feet. Sam doubled up with laughter and hollered, "Go it, Newt! You are making a mile a minute!"



Running a race with a turning log and getting the worst of it.

If he had kept his mouth shut, I might have finally brought the log to a stop. When he yelled, it so disconcerted me that my foot slipped and into the lake I went with a loud, wet splash. The only reason I did not go clear under was because I seized the log which had bucked me off.

Sam enjoyed this very much. He told me so right to my face. He said it was one of the funniest things he had ever seen me do, and complimented me over and over. After this soaking, I did not care much what happened to me, so after Sam had left the canoe, we both dragged it over the logs until we reached terra firma.

While I built up a roaring fire to dry my clothes, Sam pitched the tent and unloaded part of the duffle from the canoe, because we had decided that if the place was as good as it looked, we might stay here two or three days.

If it had not been for the dead wood in the front door yard of our camp, it would have been hard to beat this spot. Away across Chesuncook and far beyond the opposite shore, old Mt. Katahdin reared her tall bulk into the blue sky and her ragged portions were sharply defined in the bright glare of the noon-day sun.

After we had eaten a snack, I adjusted a Maxim silencer to the muzzle of my little .22 rifle, and strolled off into the brush, think-

ing perhaps I might be able to get a spruce partridge or two for supper, without making echoes that would be heard as far east as the Atlantic or as far north as the Canadian boundary.

Well, I poked along east of the camp for



I told the old hen what I thought of her, but she stood right up and took her medicine.

a mile or more, then turned north before I saw anything bigger than a bumble-bee. I had stopped in the shade of a little fir clump to light my pipe, and when it was going good, I heard a faint sneeze behind me. Perhaps you won't believe this, but when I turned around there was a spruce partridge

sitting on a limb so close to me that I could have reached out my hand (if she had held her base) and stroked her. Evidently the smoke drifting back over my shoulder had gone up her nose and made her sneeze. When I turned around, she sat there with her head on one side, rubbering at me as much as to say, "You are no gentleman or you would not blow smoke in a lady's face."

Your spruce partridge in some instances is either absolutely fearless or absolutely foolish. Individual partridges, however, differ—what one will do another will not do, neither will the same spruce partridge necessarily conduct itself in the same manner on two consecutive occasions. Often they are panicky and will flush on the slightest provocation—other times, as in this instance, she will sit at arm's length without any appearance of fear.

I started back a few paces, brought the .22 to my eye and taking a careful bead on the bird's head was pressing the trigger when something happened.

The partridge gave a little chuckle, flew from the branch she was on and lighted on another within arm's length of me again. There she sat looking at me with her head first on one side and then on the other in a most friendly way, and edging along the branch nearer to me all the time. I lowered the .22 and the way I talked to that partridge should have made her ashamed of herself.

"You old hen," says I, shaking my finger right under her nose, "I have a good notion to knock your block off! How can I have the heart to shoot you for supper when you keep following me about within reach and trying to be friends with me like this! Have you no sense at all? You probably know I am too much of a sportsman to kill you after you've trusted me like this, and that's why you did it — you mean, low down, contemptible grafter! After the way you've acted, do you suppose I would waste good ammunition on you? No! Not only that, but I'm ashamed to be seen in your company."

With that, I turned away and walked off, leaving the partridge perched on the branch, to think over what I had said to her.

But when a fellow needs meat in camp, he cannot afford to be too sentimental, so after a short tramp I flushed another pair of "spruces," which flew into a near-by tree. I picked one off with the .22 and the other did not budge. Then I got number two,



This is the old buck that gave me a sudden surprise party.

ied their legs together, swung them from my belt and poked back along in the direction of camp.

I hadn't gone more than two rods when

a big fat buck nearly jumped out of his skin within twenty feet of me and bounded away to the south, with his white flag flying in consternation behind him at every bounce. Force of habit brought my .22 to my shoulder, but it did not make me forget that the season on deer would not open for several days yet.

I think this little incident is a fine tribute to the Maxim silencer which I wore on my .22. When I shot the two partridges, I was quite close to the buck, and I doubt if he heard either report — or if he did, it was so faint it did not disturb him.

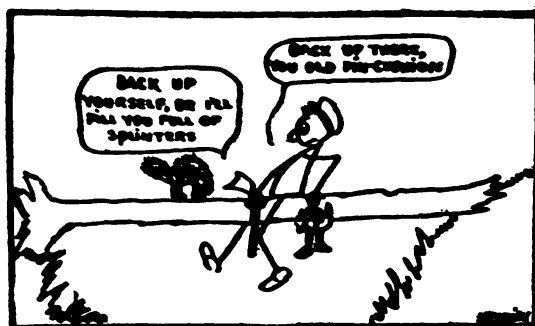
I now headed back for camp in another direction than I had come, and my course brought me to a little ravine through which babbled a brook. A rod or more up the brook from where I came out, there had fallen across the ravine a large pine, which had probably gone down under a storm. The tree was well preserved and I figured it would be easier to straddle across it than to lower myself down to the brook and climb up the other side, so with my gun before me,

I got astride the log and started to hitch across. I was getting along beautifully and was about half-way over when I chanced to look ahead and saw a big and fully matured old he-porcupine. He had just started across the log from the opposite end toward me.

"Oh, look who's here!" says I to myself, and smiled, but I kept hitching right along. Yes, and the porcupine kept on walking right along toward me, too! When he had come within perhaps five feet of me, it did not seem quite so funny as it did when I first saw him, so I stopped hitching, and we each of us sat there, trying to stare the other out of countenance. I looked down fifteen feet where the brook babbled under the log. Then I again looked at the porcupine, who had decided to move forward.

"Shoo, you old pin cushion!" says I in a commanding tone, to which he answered with a nasty growl, and kept on moving slowly towards me. I could see by the expression on his face that he was peevish

and irritable. There was a bad gleam in his eyes, and every little while he would grit his teeth and look at me, as much as to say, "This is my own private crossing and I won't give it up to you or anybody else!" Of course, I could have knocked him off the



It wasn't that I feared the porcupine—I merely respected him.

log with my rifle, but somehow or other, I sort of admired his spunk and I knew that a fifteen foot drop would make him go away with a nastier disposition than ever.

Finally he got close to me and growled so threateningly that I gave ground and backed toward the root of the tree until I reached

the side I started from. All the time the "Porky" followed me right up as fast as I would let him, and as soon as he reached the bank, he stopped long enough to give me a contemptible look and then waddled off into the brush.

He deserved a swift kick for the way he treated me, and he would have got it, too, if it had not been for filling my rubber hunting boot full of splinters.

Talk about this being a free country. I tell you it is nothing of the kind when you meet a porcupine on a log-crossing. He is the most independent beast that walks on four feet, and if he had met a bob-cat out on that log, the bob-cat would have backed off just as I did. I lifted my hat to him as he disappeared in the brush, and when I arrived back at camp, Sam was looking through the Goerz glasses out across Chesuncook. He called me to come and have a gaze through the binoculars, so I joined him, but after peering through and adjusting the glasses to my vision I failed to see anything worth looking at — except a beautiful ex-

panse of water and the wooded shore a mile or more across from us.

"Well," says I in a tone of inquiry, "what, if anything, is there to look at through the magnifiers?"

"Go up and down that shore line and see



I thought I was the discoverer of the cow moose until Sam spoke.

if you can't pick up something worth looking at," says Sam in a portentous tone.

I did so, and finally I made out, standing knee deep in the water near a protected sand cove on the opposite side, where there was little driftwood, a big cow moose.

"Gee!" says I, "there's a cow moose over there! Have a look at her, Sam—

she's a peach. My, I'm glad I saw her first — how's it come you didn't see her?"

"I did," says Sam in a tone of deep disgust, "I've been watching her for half an hour, but I thought you might like to take a squint at her, too."

"Oh!" says I. Then I took another look. As she stood there knee deep in the cool water she lowered her head occasionally. I presume she was browsing on the lily pads in the cove. Although she was quite a distance off the glasses were so powerful that I could plainly observe her flicking off the flies with her tail — no! no! Not with her tail — I didn't mean that! Say, look here, gentle reader, if you think for one fraction of a second that I don't know that a cow moose has no tail, never did have one, and never will have one, then you are a good deal mistaken. Let any fakirs say that cow mooses have tails if they want to, but I'll not do it. No, it must have been something else I saw her do instead of flicking off flies with her tail, but I can't just now remember what it was.

The day was now drawing to its close, and with the waning of the afternoon I became conscious of a species of internal gnawing which told me it was about time to feed. When I am out in the wilderness, trying to get as far back to nature as I can, tramping over uneven ground, lugging a heavy rifle most of the time, I always carry my appetite with me. There is something about the ozone in the air and the tang of the pines that makes me so hungry that it wouldn't be safe to lock me up in a room with a live chicken. Yea, brother, when I go back into the tall and un lumbered I am certainly strong on the "eats."

I kept gently suggesting to Sam that it was time to set the banquet table, and finally we started supper going.

Sam baked the biscuits while I dressed the birds and broiled them over the coals. This was according to Sam's suggestion. He said that of course I couldn't bake biscuits, but possibly by accident I might manage to broil the partridges without making a mess of it.

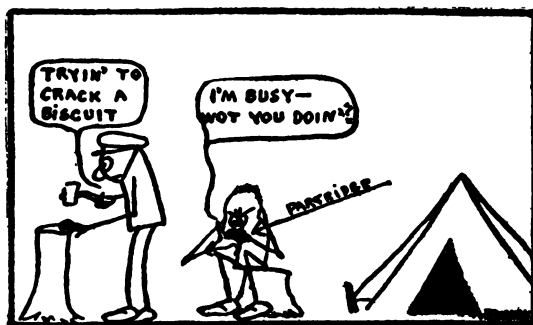
I could see, however, that after he had

given me this end of the work he didn't trust me even then — he kept leaving his biscuits and coming over to me to tell me how to dress the partridges and split them, just as if I hadn't forgotten more about preparing partridges for the table than he ever knew! But this didn't keep him from butting in at intervals every few minutes, until the birds were done to a turn. Then he went to look at his biscuits, and Holy Moses! — they were badly, badly burned.

I hollered and yelped in delight, but Sam didn't join in the chorus. He was as sore as a whipped pup, and I wouldn't tell anybody in print what he said, because it was not nice — it was naughty, naughty!

I kept laughing until says Sam, "What are you laffing at? You'll have to eat 'em, because I'm not going to bake any more biscuits this night." Then I didn't laugh quite so uproariously, and Sam brought the biscuits on. There was a little portion on the inside of each that was not burned, but we had to peel 'em like apples in order to get off the black, burned outside crust, and when you fi-

nally got peeled down to what was good, it wasn't much bigger than a marble. We had to work harder for our supper than if we had been squirrels trying to get at the inside of a hickory nut.



While I ate the burned biscuits Sam got busy with the broiled partridges.

While I was getting at the inside of two biscuits Sam had devoured one partridge and was beginning on the other. He would probably have eaten that, too, if I hadn't left off eating biscuits and started in on bird.

"You're a fine grafter, ain't you," says I, "turning me loose on biscuits and turning yourself loose on the birds!" Then I con-

tinued to compliment him on his ability as a biscuit baker. I asked him why, if he was such a fine bakerino, he didn't bake the biscuits so as to leave the burnt part inside and the edible part outside, and I kept rubbing it in until he began to get kind of pceevish.

After we got the supper things cleaned up I took another squint through the glasses to



Did we have fun with the cow moose, or did she have fun with us? You will find the answer in the next chapter.

see if the cow moose on the opposite shore was still in statu quo, and she was.

"Sam," says I, "Old Bossy is still standing knee deep in the drink, and if you say so

we can have a regular Sunday school picnic with her."

"Meaning which?" says Sam.

"Meaning," says I, "that about a couple of hours after the sun has dropped out of sight, and darkness has spread her inky pall upon the face of the waters, we will sneak across in the canoe, and with our little acetylene light in the bow, we'll be able to get up near enough to that cow to spit in her face if we want to!"

Sam's answer is found in the next chapter.

CHAPTER V.

IN the last chapter I promised to tell you about the experience Sam and I had with that old cow moose, so here goes:

As the sun turned to a great ball of red fire and dropped slowly behind the ragged bulk of old Katahdin — as the September



It got Sam's goat when I told him he was a coward.

shadows gathered and the dusky twilight settled down over the broad stretches of Chesuncook, the cow moose still stood knee deep

among the lily pads away across the lake from us. We watched her through the glass until she merged into the dusk, then I began planning to have a little sport at her expense.

In our outfit was a carbide lamp which I had brought along for use in studying the wild creatures along shore by night from the canoe, so I proposed to Sam that we get this lamp into gear at once, paddle across the lake and flash it on Mrs. Moose.

This proposition did not seem to appeal to Sam strongly.

He said cow mooses did not like very well to have the spotlight turned on them, and that he would much prefer to lounge around the camp fire smoking and swapping fabrications.

"I hope you're not afraid of an old cow moose," says I.

"It's not a matter of cowardice," says Sam, "it's merely a matter of me being more conservative than you are — 'fools rush in where angels fear to tread.'"

"Meaning by that," says I, "that you are

an angel? If you are an angel, Sam," says I, "the wing sprouts have not pushed through the padding of your shoulders as yet. You haven't enough nerve to go and pay a friendly call on an old indigent cow moose — that's what's the matter with you — you're a quitter!"

"By thunder, I'll go," says Sam, "but if anything happens don't say I didn't warn you."

So we lighted the lamp until it was burning brightly and beautifully, fixed ourselves in the canoe, covered the lamp with a sweater so the beams could not escape into the darkness and each seizing a paddle pushed our way silently and swiftly across the lake towards the further shore. We aimed to strike in on the shore at a considerable distance above where we had last seen the moose. Our aim was good and when we found ourselves close to shore I quietly laid up my paddle and removed the sweater from the light and threw it shoreward parallel to which Sam softly moved the canoe towards the moose.

The first thing that came within the radius of light was a mink, probably on a still hunt for a late supper. When the light found him he paused in his snake-like movement along a log and blinked his beady eyes into the glare, then he turned away and scurried into the brush. The next thing I found was a flying squirrel which minded the light not at all but went about its business climbing a tree while I kept the spot light on it. When it had gone up perhaps thirty feet it took a dive down and alighted on the trunk of another tree within a few feet of the ground.

"I'd hate to be a flyin' squirrel," whispered I to Sam, "because you have to walk so dog-goned far in order to get to fly — I'd either want to fly all the time or hoof it all the time, one or t'other."

"S-h-h-h!" says Sam, "shut up or you'll scare the moose!"

Sam didn't "sh-h-h" any too soon either because when we turned the next point there stood the old cow in the cove. As the canoe approached her with no more noise than a cat would make walking on velvet carpet, she

never turned her head. I held the light on her straight and true. Slowly and silently we went nearer until we were not more than thirty feet distant. Sam then swung the canoe a little and we lay there idly with the full, fierce radius of light showing her up in every detail.

She looked as if she had seen a great many hard winters and as many hot summers. I cannot tell how old a cow moose is without going up to her and opening her mouth and looking at her teeth, but I judged this "Old Bossy" was probably in her dotage — I think she was in the sundown of her life, as I might say, because she looked the part. As we lay there she turned her head and gave the light a contemptible stare. I don't know what she thought it was — maybe she thought it was the sun rising. While we looked her over and sized her up a minute or two Sam stuck his paddle into the water and started the canoe along. Then something happened!

The cow was between us and the shore and when we moved the great bulk of her

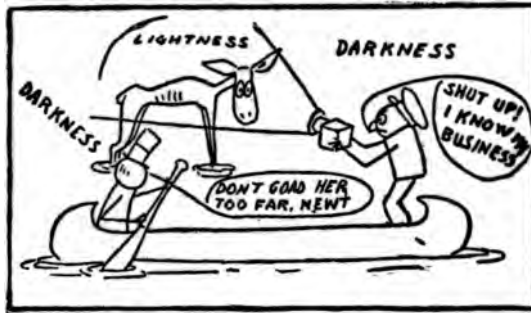
shadow fell upon the thick foliage. The moose saw this great shadow move and I guess she thought it was something coming out of the woods after her. At any rate she made one great dash right towards us. Before Sam could get the canoe on the way there was a collision. Talk about your mix-ups! — There was about the fiercest snarl-up for the next minute or two of moose, men, canoe, light and paddles that has ever happened. Scared out of her wits she hit the canoe. Scared out of our wits we each of us gave a loud whoop and into the water we went!

My yell was cut in two right in the middle because I went in head first and all over. Out went the light and the water closed over it. There we were in water waist deep and cold enough to bathe the forehead of a fever patient. "Old Bossy," once the light went out, seemed to get her bearings and turning swiftly went ashore with a great splash and beat it back into the brush snapping saplings and limbs as she went.

"You're a nice mess, ain't you?" says

Sam to me as soon as he could cough the water out of his lungs.

"If I am any worse looking than you sound," says I with chattering teeth, "you're a sight!"



That moose was so skinny we could almost see through her.

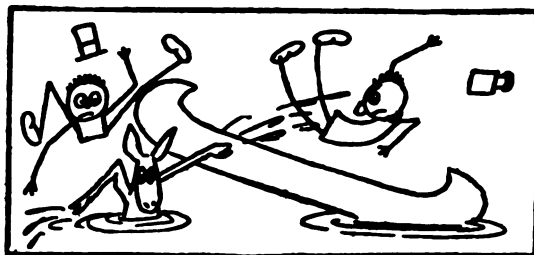
"I told you what would happen," says Sam, "but you would come and I hope you choke!"

"Well," says I, nearly coughing my fool head off, "you almost get your wish!"

"Where's the canoe?" says Sam from out of the darkness.

"I guess 'Old Bossy' carried it off on her horns," says I.

"A cow moose ain't got any horns, you darn fool!" says Sam.



There was a fierce mix-up when the old slob
of a cow struck the canoe.

"Well," says I, "I'm not going to stand here up to my arm-pits in cold water and discuss that question with you any longer — me for terra firma," whereupon I waded ashore.

After Sam had pawed around in the water for a while he finally got hold of the canoe and the two paddles, which he brought ashore, but the lamp we did not find until the next morning and then it was an easy matter to pick it up in four feet of water.

After this horrible catastrophe happened we emptied the canoe, got in and started back for camp paddling with all our might to keep from freezing to death. It was black dark, but we could make out the shore line and at the speed we drove our craft we were soon close to what we thought was camp. "Thoughts," however, have led many a man astray and when we began to investigate we found to our surprise that we had missed our landing so we backed off and tried it again. Sam insisted that camp was up lake from us, while I thought sure it was down the other way.

I hate to think even now of that awful night we spent trying to locate that camp. Time and time again we went ashore over the treacherous logs to find to our intense disgust that the camp was nowhere in sight.

You will realize how hard it is to locate a tent back in the woods along a shore of a lake on a dark night. Perhaps you have tried it. If you have not do so some time, then you will know. Up and down the shore line we paddled, saying things to each other that

have no place in this narrative. Finally after we had called one another all the names we could think of plus a lot more, we reached that spot where there was nothing left to say so we merely sat there in the canoe, soaked, cold, hungry, miserable, silent and sore.

All the matches we had of course were wet, and if we had had matches they wouldn't have done us any good — the lamp was under water on the other side of the lake from us. After an hour's silence I couldn't stand it any longer so I broke forth in a new burst of abuse.

"Do you mean me?" says Sam in a nasty tone of voice.

"No, I don't mean you," says I in a nastier tone of voice. "I wouldn't talk to you because you're not fit to talk to — I'm cussin' that old cow moose, and if you think you can stop me go ahead and do it!"

"Layin' all jokes aside," says Sam, "have you got any chewin' tobacco about you?"

"Yes," says I, "I have a wet plug. You don't deserve a chew of it but I wouldn't even refuse a dog a chew of tobacco when

he wanted it, so here it is," and I handed him the plug.

I stood up in the canoe and tried to thrash my arms about me in an effort to get warm, but Sam made me sit down for fear the canoe would go over again.

Well, we sat there, and we sat there, and we sat there in the dark, wet to the hide and sore as a couple of ripe boils. I asked



It's mighty handy to have somebody around to blame things on.

Sam what time it was and he said he thought it was about time to commit suicide.

"Ain't you got no watch with you?" says he.

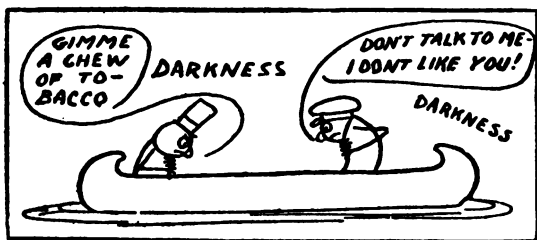
"Sure I have," says I, "but how the Sam Hill can I see the face of a watch a black night like this when I haven't matches — think I've got eyes like a cat or owl's eyes?"

"Then what did you ask me for?" says Sam. But my teeth chattered so that I couldn't answer — besides there was no answer to it. I figured out it must be about 3 A. M. but I wasn't sure. All I knew was that I couldn't see the slightest hint of a sunrise in the east and I knew that the sky would begin to get pink in that direction along about 4:30 or 5 A. M. that time of year.

Finally we got so cold that we could scarcely move and we agreed to go ashore, pull the canoe out and jump about to liven up our circulation. So we did this and as soon as we got out on the ground we danced, playing "Ring-Around-Rosie" in the dark about some trees. My foot slipped while I was trying to run around a tree and I fell with my face against the tree. Sam heard me say "Ouch!" and asked me what I was doing. I told him I started in to play

“ Ring-Around Rosie,” but wound up by playing “ Bump on the Nosey.”

Thus we enlivened the tedium of the dragging hours after midnight. Our coming ashore, however, did not serve to warm us



The above picture shows everything we suffered except the shivers.

up. The only comfort we had between us was that wet plug of tobacco. It was not long before that was gone. For a while we sat side by side on the ground in the dark with our backs against a big tree chewing tobacco and seeing who could expectorate the farthest — the only means we had of telling was by the sound when the expectoration struck the leaves in front of us. In other words, if Sam's efforts sounded more distant

than mine, then he won. But the way it sounded to me I figured out that I put it over him to the extent of nine and one-quarter inches. Sam would not admit this so then I said, "Well, you've either got to admit that I am the winner, or else that I can hear better than you can," but Sam was in that state of mind where he would not admit anything, so I stopped playing this game with him — but then I was almost all out of saliva anyhow.

By and by the light of another day began to find us as we sat there against the tree — the faint streaks from the east stole into the woods and chased the lingering shadows in all directions. It was growing light rapidly now and presently we saw something right in front of us about fifteen feet distant.

I will give any man, woman or child fifty dollars in gold who will tell me just what we saw before I tell you. I pause for an answer? (No answer.)

The first thing Sam and I saw loom up out of the shadows in front of us was our TENT!

There we had been sitting in the dark,

only a few steps away from dry matches, warm beds, grub, hot coffee and comfort!

Sam rose slowly to his feet and turning to me said, "Newt, if you will do me a favor will do you one." "I will do most any-



Just think of what we went through — and the tent only a few feet distant.

ing within reason for you, Sam," says I, with tears in my eyes.

"Very well then," says Sam, and he turned his back to me as he said it. "Now, will you kindly kick me just as hard as you can hand it over the plate, then I will kick you back twice as hard."

"Nix on the kicks," says I. "Me for something to eat and a camp fire and some

clothes that have not been soaked like these I have."

After Sam and I had dried out, warmed up and upholstered ourselves internally with grub the world looked brighter. As I sat smoking by the camp fire after breakfast I became drowsy and I noticed Sam nodding, too, so I proposed that we bunk up in the tent and sleep a few hours to make up for lost time, so we got busy lying down.

I believe Sam went to sleep before he touched the balsam boughs. Gee! I wish I could do that!—I never could get to sleep in a hurry—I always have to take my time and untangle all my troubles and think things over generally before I can doze off. By and by, however, I went to sleep, and I think I had probably been asleep fifteen minutes when something fuzzy ran across my face. I bounded up like a bent spring and threw the blankets helter skelter in time to see a red squirrel, with his tail in the air beating it out of the tent. This never feezed Sam,—he never knew it happened. I curled up again in the blanket while the

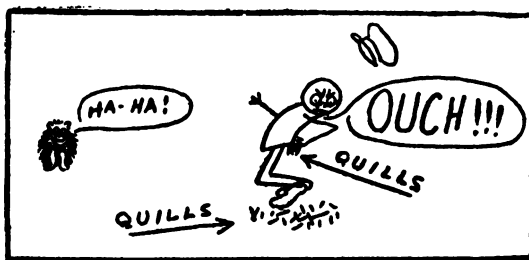
red squirrel went up a nearby tree and called me every mean name he could lay his tongue to — he was still cussin' me when I went to sleep again and I slept for perhaps another fifteen minutes when I was awakened by a scratching outside the tent which sounded as if it came from the Commissary Department.

Rising softly I sneaked to the tent-flap and looked out. There was a porcupine on the limb of a tree nearby trying to reach the bacon which had been hung from a string right under him.

I grabbed up a stick which would reach him and stepping very quietly in my stockinged feet I gave him such a jab that he lost his hold and down he bumped to the ground.

You should have seen him bristle up, look nasty and switch his tail around! Then he waddled off into the brush and I'll bet he had an opinion of me that I would not even want a snake to have. I took a step or two forward to pick up a stone which I was going to send after him when I stepped on something that made me go into the air about

three feet with a howl of pain. I lifted up my foot and there inbedded in my heel was a porcupine quill which he had shed when he fell. It hurt like blazes, too. I wanted to get it out as quickly as possible so I thought I'd sit on the ground in order to have a bet-



He that sitteth on a porcupine quill shall rise again.

ter pull on it and that was another mistake. When I sat down I sat on another quill and arose with another yell.

Yea, verily, he who sitteth upon a porcupine quill shall rise again.

I then paid attention to the quill which I had sat upon and after removing that one took the one out of my heel, by which time I was wide awake and too mad to even try

BACK TO NATURE

III

to go to sleep again, so I sat down by the camp fire and filled my pipe to see if I could not get a little comfort out of it.

CHAPTER VI

AFTER getting dumped from the canoe by the cow moose and being unable to locate camp in the darkness, and spending a horrible night in our cold and clammy clothes, as detailed in the last chapter, Sam and I, because of lack of sleep bunked up early the following night and were soon in slumberland. The sleeping tent we occupied had two balsam beds in it, one on either side of the tent. Sam snored in one and I slept in the other, but his nasal trombone solo failed to keep me awake on this occasion. At the end of my bed was a crotched stick about three feet long, driven into the ground and on this stick hung a lantern which I would always douse after I had got into bed.

I don't know how long I had been asleep, but I was awakened by some movement at the foot of my bed and opening my eyes

wide I stared into black darkness at — nothing. Presently as I lay there wondering what had waked me up, I felt something walking lightly up one leg on the outside of the blankets. Slipping my fingers into the pocket of my flannel shirt, I got a match, scratched it and without rising quietly lighted the lantern, which I turned up to full glare. Then I looked to see who the visitor was, and when I beheld a full grown skunk sitting on my stomach and looking into my eyes in a friendly way, all the hair I had left on top of my head stood up straight like the bristles in a wire brush!

I didn't say nothin' because it was such a surprise party I was afraid to speak. The light in the tent was sufficient to wake Sam, who sat up in bed and looked across. When he saw that skunk sitting on me, he nearly choked with laughter. "Keep quiet, you durn fool!" I hissed, without moving. "For Heaven's sake don't start anything that will make this skunk defend himself with the weapons which a skunk usually uses!"

Sam lay down, stuffed the end of a blanket into his mouth, and I could hear him choking with mirth. "Go ahead and laugh, you idiot," I hissed again, "and I hope you bust a blood vessel!" The cold sweat of



It wasn't that I was afraid of the skunk, but
I didn't like to hurt it.

anguish oozed out in little beads on my forehead, and ran down into my eyes, as that skunk sat there within two feet of my face and looked me over. I had visions of "He didn't know it was loaded!" and I knew if that creature should take a sudden dislike to me, it would spoil my whole vacation. I didn't have very many clothes with me, and

I knew if the skunk lost his temper and turned his atomizer on me, it would be either bury the clothes and go naked, or wear 'em and be heart-sick and stomach-sick until the odor wore off. Not only that, but who would want to sleep in a tent that had been fertilized by a skunk?

I had heard about skunks straying into the tents of campers at night, but this was my first personal experience. A skunk has no sense of propriety — he will crawl under a tent and walk carelessly into a man's eyes and ears, when he is least expected and without invitation. A skunk seems to think he has a perfect right to enter your sleeping apartments in the woods and encourage an attack of nervous prostration while he sits on your chest in bed, or curls snugly up beside you on top of the blankets.

Suddenly there popped into my mind a story I had heard of a camper who had resented the intrusion of a skunk in his tent and had thrown it off the bed clothes. Instead of upsetting its perfumery bottle, the skunk in this instance bit the man on the fin-

ger and he died a horrible death from hydrophobia.

When I thought of that awful tragedy, my hair stood up straighter and stiffer than ever and the cold beads of perspiration oozed afresh.

"He wants to be friends with you, Newt," says Sam, between chuckles; "put your hand on his head and stroke him down the back." "You go to blazes!" says I, without moving a hair's breadth. Then Sam stuffed the blanket into his mouth again and choked some more.

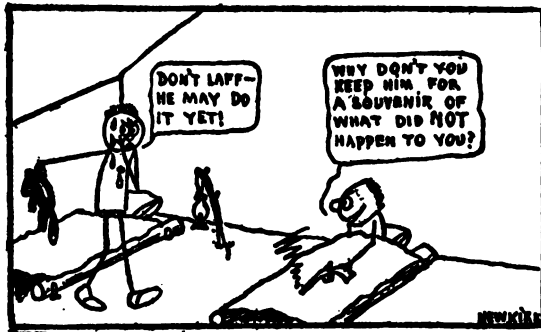
I treated that skunk as well as I knew how. There wasn't anything in the world that I could think of that I wouldn't have done for him, if he had only got off my chest and walked out of the tent the way he came in, but he didn't show any disposition to go—he just sat there on my belt-line looking at me, and then looking across at Sam, as much as to say, "It is nice and warm in this tent, so I guess I'll just stick around awhile."

Presently he walked up a few inches farther toward my face, then turned around and

brushed his tail across my nose. I tried hard to hold back a sneeze I felt coming, but it was no use and when the "ker-chew" came, the skunk jumped up about six inches, then came down and sat quiet, looking surprised and startled. Sam had covered up his head, but I could hear him laughing and see the blankets shaking. Presently he stuck his nose out and says: "That skunk loves you, Newt, and I want you to be kind to him. Why don't you get up and give him a can of condensed milk — I think he is hungry!" Then I told Sam to go to blazes again — well, not "blazes," but another place just as hot.

I felt that I couldn't stand the situation much longer — I felt I would have to throw off the blankets and screech as loud as I could holler, and take the chances of letting the skunk do its worst. Suddenly as I was trying to control myself, there was a sharp report from across the tent and the skunk rolled over, deader than a door nail, with a little .22 through its head that had been fired by Sam, from his partridge pistol. I carried

the animal out of the tent with its business end down and flung it away into the brush, after which I returned to the balsam. Fortunately the little black and white beast left no odor behind. Sam laughed himself to

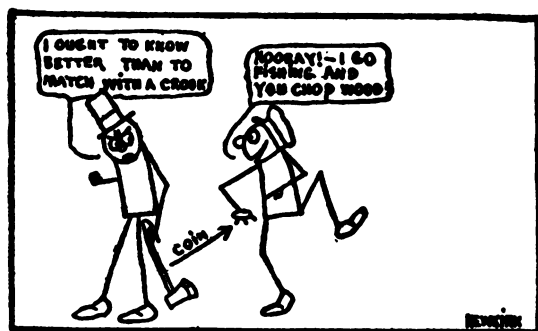


I didn't feel safe until after I had carried the critter out of the tent.

sleep, but I was so wrought up that I didn't drop off for at least two hours, and then it was only to dream of seven million skunks walking across my face in single file.

The next morning I told Sam I guessed I would go fishing. Sam says, "Guess again, and you'll guess you are going to chop some wood." "I'll tell you

what I'll do," says I, "we'll match to see who goes fishing and who stays in camp to chop wood." Sam is a thoroughbred sport, so we matched and he lost. Then away I went trolling. I had just got out my line



It made Sam very sore, when I matched him,
and he had to stay in camp and chop wood.

and passed the first point down lake below camp when I had a good strike and seized my rod. Gee, how that fish did pull and haul, and rip and tear. I didn't know what it was, because it didn't show up on top, but I knew it was a good one, and I handled it with that artistic wrist movement which soon tired it out and made it sulk down deep

under the canoe. The water was quiet and I didn't have to bother about my craft, so by degrees I pumped up my catch until I could see it was a good big lake trout. He was about all in, but he still kept boring right down, until I got the net under him and lifted him into the canoe. He flopped around some before I could give him a rap on the coco with a small round stick of green wood, which I carried and which is the best "killing bait" I know of. After that he quivered a few times and then lay quiet. I guess he weighed about nine pounds — but I am only guessing. I kept on trolling for an hour or more after this, but without success and finally turned the bow of the canoe toward home.

As I was paddling along a sudden inspiration came to me, so I got hold of the fish, laid it in the stern of the canoe and put a short-sack over it.

"What luck?" says Sam, as the bow touched shore in front of camp. "Nothin' doing," says I, as I stepped out. "You're a bum fisherman," says Sam; "after we eat a

snack, I'll show you how to catch fish"—and he did. After we had got something under our belts we started out again. "Who's going to paddle?" says Sam. "I'll paddle," says I, "on one condition." "And what's that?" says he. "I'll paddle," says I, "if you will promise to sit in the bow and fish, with your back to me, and will agree, if you get fast to a fish, to keep quiet and not change your position." "What's the matter with you?" says Sam, "you are fussier than an old woman." "That's all right," says I. "I know you are very excitable—it doesn't take a fish weighing more than a pound to get your goat, and I'm not going to take any chance of having you lose your head and being dumped out of this canoe into the cold, clammy water."

This speech touched Sam's pride as I meant it should and he says, "You give me a pain in the neck! I'll tell you what I'll do—just to show you that there isn't a fish in this lake big enough to make my heart go one beat faster, I'll promise you to sit in that seat with my back to you, and further-

more, when I get a strike, I'll promise you not to turn my head one hair's breadth around, in order to look back at my line — I'll promise to play the fish and land it without even looking toward the fish, until I get



I quietly hooked on the dead fish and laid it in the water behind the canoe.

it up on a short line. Now, if I can do that I guess you'll admit I'm some fisherman — what do you say?" "It's a go," says I. So Sam fixed himself in the bow, while I stepped in stern and pushed off with the paddle.

After we got out into deep water and struck a straight away course down the bay Sam

began to pay out his line. There was a little breeze blowing the way we were going, which carried the canoe at trolling speed and all I had to do was to hold the canoe blade in the water with the handle under my arm, in order to keep the course of our craft straight and true. This gave me two hands to work with, so when Sam's line was out a short distance, I reached out and got it between my fingers, hauled in his bait, and then slowly, gently and evenly pulled off his line for him until I heard him snap his reel click and knew that he thought he had out enough. In order that he might feel a natural pull on the tip of the rod, which would be caused by the weight of his lure and the weight of the line he had out, I pulled the line taut and sat on it.

Then I quietly removed the short-sack from the dead laker in the stern, thrust the hook on the end of the line through the tough part of its upper jaw, laid it gently into the water and paid off the line as it fell behind the canoe. I kept this up until all of the line was out except the slack between

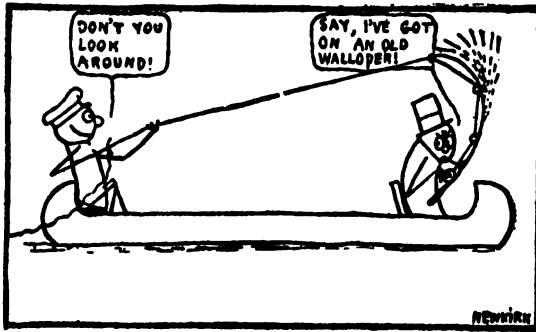
the taut line fast to the laker and the taut line from me to the rod tip. Then I suddenly let go of the fish and gave a yank on the line to the rod, which made the reel buzz.

Sam straightened up with a jerk. I saw him start to turn his head but he remembered and controlled this impulse. "Don't you look around, or you are no fisherman!" says I. "I didn't look around," says Sam, "but I want you to know there ain't one man in a million could keep from looking around when a fish strikes like that — I've got on a whale and don't you forget it!"

Just then I reached out with my left hand and tore off a few more yards from the reel. "Gee whiz, but ain't he a fighter!" says Sam. "That's what he is," says I. "Play him careful, Sam, and for goodness' sake don't lose him!" "Don't you worry about me losing him," says Sam. "I've got him well hooked — I can tell by the way he's acting!" Then Sam began to gain a little line on his reel. I let him get back perhaps fifty feet, then I reached out again and tore

off about twice that much with yank after yank that bent the rod nearly double.

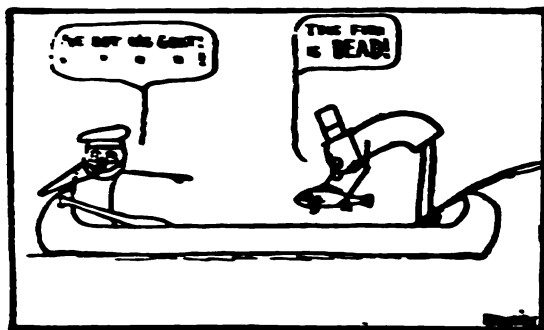
I could see that it took all the moral courage Sam had in him to keep from looking around while I was doing this, and to aggravate him still more, I says, "Oh,



Every little while I would tear off some line,
just to keep Sam busy.

look! — he's flopping around back there on top of the water!" "You can't make me look back," says Sam, game to the core. "What do you s'pose you've got on, Sam?" says I. "Oh, nothin' more than a big salmon," says Sam, trying to appear cool and collected; "I can tell he's a salmon by the

way he acts. He'll probably go four or five pounds. Now, if it was a laker, it wouldn't make any such runs as that. I've caught thousands and thousands of lakers and the

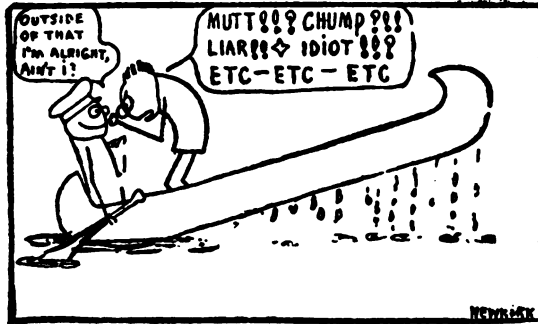


I wish you could have seen Sam's face, when the truth finally dawned on him.

minute I get a strike I can tell right off whether it's a laker, a salmon, or a trout."

"By George," says I, "I wish I knew as much about fish as you do. Of course I've never had as much experience as you, but if I watch how you handle fish perhaps I can learn a good deal on this trip." "Well," says Sam, "some men are born fishermen and others don't seem to be able to ever

learn the game." Then he held his rod gripped in the crotch of his elbow and lighted his pipe, just to show me he was as cool as a cucumber. "Now, take for in-



He called me everything he could think of,
then a whole lot more things.

stance this morning, when you went out fishing," he went on; "you were out fiddling around for a couple of hours and you never got a nibble. Here I've only been out fifteen minutes and I have a good big salmon on the end of my line. It's all in knowing how to bait your hook and where to fish."

"Why," says I, "you didn't tell me to

go on this course we are moving on!" "It wasn't necessary," says Sam; "you happened to hit the right course by accident, so it wasn't necessary for me to say anything." "Sam," says I, "do you believe it does any good to spit on your bait before you put it in the water?" "Oh, bosh," says Sam; "them kind of superstitions make me sick — superstition and ignorance go hand in hand."

"Your salmon," says I, "seems to have quieted down during the last few minutes." "Yes," says Sam, "he's sparring for his second wind — he'll make another run presently." Then I reached out again and tore off some more line. "What did I tell you!" says Sam. "By George, I can tell just what a fish is going to do, every time!"

I thought it was about time to bring the comedy to a close, so I sort of held back the canoe to give Sam an opportunity to reel in his catch. Slowly and steadily it came without a struggle. "He's all in," says Sam, as he brought the fish home; "I've got him all tired out." "Yes," says I, "he acts just

like a dead fish, doesn't he? Do you want me to net him, Sam?" "Never mind," says Sam, "I always net my own fish." "Is that so!" says I; "it isn't every fisherman who can do that." "Well," says Sam, "of course it does take some skill for a man to handle his rod, and his fish, and his net, all at the same time, but it can be learned by long practice."

By this time the fish was up on a short line, but Sam had not turned his head. "You can look around now, Sam," says I; "you certainly are a wonder for coolness — you've done something that I don't believe there is another fisherman living could do, and I'm man enough to admit it — go ahead and look around, I'm satisfied and give in."

Sam threw out his chest a couple of inches and looked around at the fish lying on the surface. Then he straightened up, rubbed his eyes and looked again, but didn't say anything. "Oh, it's a laker, isn't it?" says I. "Yes," says Sam, very short. "I thought I understood you to say it was a salmon, Sam," says I. "Don't bother a man when

he is about to net a fish," says Sam. "That fish seems to be unconscious, Sam," says I. Sam didn't say anything — he simply slipped the net under the fish, lifted it into the canoe behind him, and laid it down between us, cold and limp and dead. Sam stared at it with his eyes bulged out like a beetle's. I threw him the killing stick and says, "Go ahead and kill him, Sam — he's liable to jump out of the boat and get away." Sam picked up the stick, poked the fish a couple of times and says, "Well, that beats me." "What beats you?" says I. "This fish is dead!" says Sam. "So it is," says I, "now, how do you account for that?" "You can search me," says Sam; "it certainly did make a good fight." "Yes," says I, "I'll witness to that." Sam stooped over and examined the hook in the fish's mouth. "By George, he's hooked solid!" says Sam.

"How long do you s'pose that fish has been dead?" says I. "Oh, only a few minutes," says Sam. "In that case," says I, "how do you account for the fact that it is as stiff as a board and that its eyes have

sort of begun to pale out, like a fish on ice in a fish market? ”

Sam didn't answer me for a minute, but kept looking steadily down at the fish and thinking things over. I was trying to hold in, but my sides were shaking so that it made the canoe tremble. Then he looked up at me and an expression of almost human intelligence came into his face. He looked from me under the seat I sat on, and there he saw dark blood stains from the dead fish — stains which had been left there some time before. Then, he tumbled.

He called me a fool, a hypocrite, a four-flusher, a mutt, a chump, an idiot, a liar, plus a lot more things I can't remember and these little pet names were all sandwiched between deep purple curses. After he got all through, I says, “ Well, outside of all that, I'm all right, ain't I, Sammy? ” “ You paddle me ashore! ” says Sam. “ What's your hurry? ” says I; “ let's catch this laker over again — it's only been caught twice.” Oh, how I did rub it into him! “ Salmon,” says I, “ you don't know a salmon from a dried

herring. You can have just as much fun with a dead one as a live one, can't you, Sam? You are a wonder, old man, to play and net a dead fish all by yourself."

"You paddle me ashore or I'll crack your fool head!" says Sam and so we went back to camp. Sam was grouchy all the rest of the day, but I was tickled to death—I just went around huggin' myself over the joke I played on him.

Every once in awhile as I pottered around camp I would laugh out loud and then Sam would glare at me. He didn't ask me what I was laughing at—he didn't have to—he knew well enough.

"I'll get even yet, you pie-faced gazabo!" says Sam. Then he took his rifle and went off hunting to rid himself of my society.

CHAPTER VII

WITH the permission of the reader, I will skip lightly over our life in camp during the four weeks following the incident told about in the previous chapter. This brings us up to about November 1st.



I was a fool to listen to Sam's back to nature
dope.

In those four weeks nothing of any great consequence happened. Shortly after the open season on deer began, we got a young

buck and hung him up in camp for meat. What Sam wanted, however, and what I yearned for, was a bull moose — and those were scarce.

We had broken camp on the east shore of Chesuncook Lake and with our outfit stowed snugly in the canoe, we moved down lake, until we came to what is known as the "Thoroughfare," leading from Chesuncook into Caribou Lake, where we finally found a small open clearing, on the north shore of Caribou, where there has once been an old lumber camp, long since rotted down. There we went into camp again and there is where we got back to nature with a vengeance.

Honest Injun, it makes me hungry now, when I look back on the struggle for existence which we went through in that camp. We called it "Camp Starvation," and that was a good name for it. At the end of two weeks in "Camp Starvation," our flour, coffee, tea, sugar, lard and meal gave out, which was equivalent to all the grub giving out, because that's about all we had. There

were left four cans of baking powder, some salt and some pepper, but you know as well as I do that a man can't live in the woods on baking powder and salt and pepper alone. I was disposed to say, "I told you so," to Sam, but he was cheerful in spite of the odds against us. "We are now," says Sam, "on the verge of back to nature."

"Yes," says I, "we are now on the verge of starvation — you chump!"

"The situation which now confronts us," says Sam, "will demonstrate whether or not there is enough of the primitive man in us, to wrest our subsistence from the woods and the water as our ancestors of the long past had to do. Take the Indian," says Sam, "he didn't have flour, and meal and Nabisco wafers and meat canned in Chicago. All he had was his bow and arrow and he went out into the woods and earned his living with thanks to nobody. Any man with the modern rifle and matches who can't live in the woods for a few weeks is a molly-coddle."

"Well," says I, "you can call me what-

ever you want to — I would a dog-gone sight rather be a mollycoddle and have something to eat once in a while than to be able to say, 'I am a primitive man,' simply because I had existed for a month on cracked ice and roots and hemlock bark."

"Cheer up, Newt," says Sam, trying to jolly me along. "We'll get in the canoe and I'll bet before we've gone a quarter of a mile along the lake shore, we'll down another deer or — maybe a moose."

"I've eaten so much deer meat," says I, "that I am almost ashamed any more to meet a deer in the woods — I am so sick of deer meat that it turns my stomach to see it frying in the spider."

"You're a quitter," says Sam — "that's what you are, a quitter!"

This allegation made me sore and I says to Sam, "Now, just for calling me that, we'll see who quits first. I'm going to show you that I'm just as game on this deal as you are, and if anybody ever comes along here and discovers our bleached bones, the skeleton of myself will be sitting with its back

against a tree, and its thumb to its nose, wiggling its fingers at your skeleton."

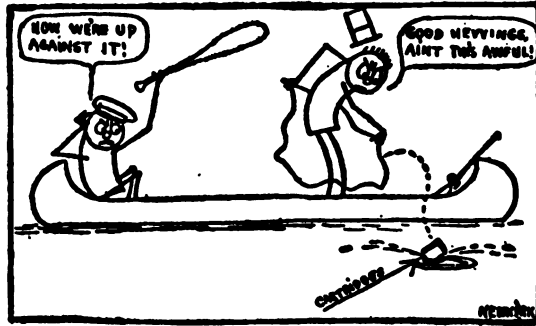
We were not only out of grub, but nearly out of ammunition. I had left only three cartridges for my rifle and eleven cartridges for the little .22 cartridge pistol. I wished then I hadn't shot so promiscuously at marks before we changed our camp location. Sam, however, had a full box of 30-30.s which he had not opened and these he rolled in a blanket and laid in the canoe before we started out to get that deer he was so sure we would find.

I left my rifle and three cartridges in camp because I was to handle the paddle.

We had just started out and were perhaps two hundred feet off shore, in water about thirty feet deep, when Sam, who was in the bow, with his rifle, shook out the blanket to spread around his legs, and I'm a primitive man if he didn't shake that box of cartridges into the lake with a splash, and down it went to the bottom.

Oh, but I'm glad he and not I lost those cartridges! I cussed him until I was black

in the face, but he never said a word back, and I called him names so mean that if he had had a spark of manhood or self-respect left in his bosom, he would have licked the



My last hope for existence splashed into the lake with those cartridges.

tar out of me. The worst of it was, those were the only cartridges he had in the world, and he hadn't even loaded his gun.

Well, there was nothing to do but go back to camp, which we did, sadder and wiser men. I was so disgusted with Sam that I didn't want to be in his presence, so I put the three cartridges I had left in my .35 Remington and went off into the woods alone to see if

I could kill a deer and thus save us from starvation.

After I had proceeded a little way, I consulted my map, which showed that about a mile to the east was a small body of water, labeled, "Deer Pond." It looked pretty good to me on the map, so I took the first old tote road leading east and by and by came to the pond. I struck it at the lower end where an old corduroy crosses the brook which runs from "Deer Pond" into "Caribou." This was a very pretty little body of water, nearly a mile long and from a quarter to half a mile wide.

I started to go around it on the north shore and the mess of alder and cedar swamps I got into, simply beggars description. The going is so thick that you may be within twenty-five feet of the water, and not know by eye-sight that there is a pond within a hundred miles. After I had worked slowly and painfully through this tangle for a distance, I forced my way to the shore line to look the lake over, and as I stood there, as handsome a big buck as you ever saw in

your life, came out of the brush on the opposite side of the lake, walked into the water knee deep and began to drink.

I figured that he was about a quarter of a mile away and that I could drop him easily at the first shot. To make certain, I took a firm rest against a tree, held on him until the ivory



Every time I pulled the trigger I felt absolutely sure that buck would drop.

bead lay snugly in the notch of the rear sights and when I had the rifle lined up on the buck's white shirt front, I pulled the trigger.

The deer merely turned his head a little,

but otherwise didn't move, and I knew then I had never touched him. "I'll get you this time, you delicious old piece of meat!" says I to myself, and after I had aimed so long it was almost painful. I pulled the trigger again — with the same results as at first. At the second shot the buck turned and stood broadside to me, as if he was about to leave the water. "Now I'll get you sure — the third time is the charm," says I, as I lined up the sights on him again and sent ball number three spinning toward him — which scored three clean misses.

I was fighting mad by now and I says to myself, "By cracky, I'll give you the other two cartridges in the magazine, hit or miss!" Taking another aim, I pulled but the hammer merely clicked.

Then it dawned on my almost human intelligence, that in my excitement I had forgotten the important fact that I had only three cartridges left and those were gone!

The buck took another drink, flicked his tail a little, walked slowly from the lake and disappeared in the brush, leaving me standing

there on the opposite shore, the president of the International Society of Mutts. I studied for a while whether I would throw the rifle into the lake or jump in myself. Then I pulled myself together and started campward.



When I realized my last cartridge was gone I had nervous prostration.

I hated like sin to meet Sam, after the fool I had made of myself. Somehow or other I had no stomach for making explanations to him, but there was no other way out of it, so I poked along on my return trip, with my useless rifle on my shoulder and my chin on my chest. I tried to convince myself

that what I had done was no worse than Sam losing his own cartridges, and I found some comfort in thinking that he was as big a chump as I.

As I mosied along silently on the old tote road, I heard something coming through the brush to my right and stopped dead still. Presently a beautiful big bull moose stepped into the road about fifty yards ahead of me and stood broadside on, sizing me up. I'll bet he had a spread of sixty inches and I know he didn't weigh less than one thousand pounds. Oh, how I cussed fate, as I stood there with my empty rifle, watching him posing, ready to be shot. I have sometimes thought since that the old bull knew very well I was out of ammunition. I was so close to him I could see the expression on his face, and unless I am mistaken he was laughing at me. After standing there quietly for a moment, he crossed the road, and made his way without hurry into the brush.

Between that point and camp I had three good standing shots at as many deer and every time I thought of that empty gun I

wished I could stand behind myself and kick me black and blue.

Sam heard me coming and ran out joyfully to meet me.

“Good for you, Newt, old sport!” says he, as he slapped me on the back. “I heard you shoot, and you got three deer, didn’t



It wasn't quite so bad as shown in the above picture, but it was bad enough.

you? You have saved the situation, Newt, and now we'll live on the fat of the land. We'll have deer's liver for supper, deer's heart for breakfast, and by to-morrow the steaks will be ready to cut into. How about a fine deer stew about to-morrow noon, hey?

Of course," Sam goes on, "I know it is against the law for a sportsman to shoot more than two deer, but in a case like this, when a hunter is facing starvation it's different. I'll bet if you were to give the facts to the Fish and Game Commissioners of Maine, they'd tell you you did perfectly right, and I'm glad you were game enough to knock three over. I tell you, Newt, it isn't everybody who can get three deer with only three shots, and I'm proud of you!"

If Sam had kept his blamed mouth shut long enough for me to say that I had not only not killed three deer, but no deer, I would have been much obliged to him, but he kept talking and slapping me on the back, congratulating me, and making a hero out of me, until I was placed in a most embarrassing position, because I knew the truth must come out sooner or later. Finally Sam says, "Well, Newt, old boy, I'll go back with you now, and we'll drag one of them deer into camp."

"What's your hurry?" says I; "let's wait a while."

I realized as soon as I said that, I shouldn't

have said it, because if Sam had any doubts before that I shot three deer, he didn't after that and now I found I was in a worse dilemma than ever.

"But we need the meat," says Sam. "I'm as hungry as a goat and we haven't had a bite of deer meat since we finished up



The big question mark above denotes that I was in doubt about what to say.

that last one day before yesterday. Come on, Newt, I'll carry the heavy end of him."

"He ain't very heavy," says I, because I couldn't think of anything else to say.

"Were they all bucks?" says Sam.

"Only one buck," says I.

"And the other two does?"

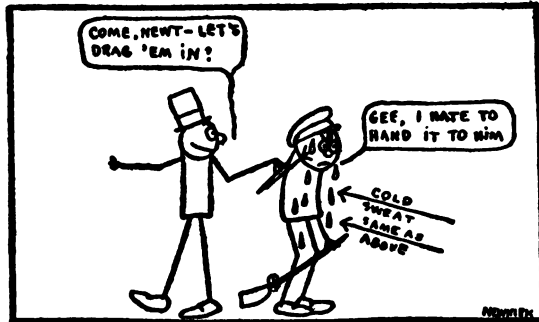
"No," says I, "not does."

"Well," says Sam, "if one was a buck, the other two must be does."

"That's so," says I, "I didn't think of that."

"One buck and two big fat does," says Sam, "that's fine!"

I saw that I was getting in bad, deeper



After the way Sam patted me on the back, I
felt like a criminal.

and deeper, so I decided to make a clean
breast of it, as I should have done in the first
place.

"Sam," says I, leading up to the truth

be preposterous — it would be hard to convince Sam, that I had shot three deer and then not be able to find even one of them. Besides my manhood asserted itself and I says, "Get thee behind me, Satan, because I won't lie to the best friend I have in the world."

"Were they good big fat ones?" says Sam.

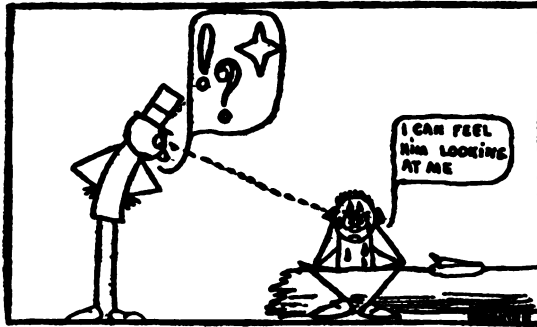
"Were what good big fat ones?" says I.

"Why the two deer you shot," says Sam.

"Sam," says I, "I may as well tell you the truth. I didn't shoot two deer."

"Well," says Sam, "I know you got one good big buck anyhow, because you told me so, and if he's as big as you said he was, he'll last us until we get back to civilization. I know just how you feel, Newt — you are ashamed to admit to me that you had to shoot three times to get one deer, but I don't want you to be ashamed of that — I've done the same thing myself. Why, many a time, I've shot five bullets after a deer and then didn't get it. It is nothing for a sportsman to use three bullets to get a deer and nobody would

think any the less of you for that, even if they knew it. However, if it will make you feel any better, I'll never tell that this buck you killed required three shots."



The gentleman sitting on the log holding his head in his hands feels as small as a shrimp.

"Heaven help me," says I to myself, "if I ever get out of this mess, I'll bet I'll never get into another one like it!"

Talk about the terrors of the inquisition and the thumb screw, and the third degree of modern times. All put together they were nothing like what I was passing through.

"Dod-gast it," said I finally, "I am going

to tell the truth if it takes the hair off — I didn't get a single deer — I shot three times at a big buck standing still and never touched it and those were the three last cartridges I had in the world. There now, that's the unvarnished truth."

I wasn't looking at Sam when I said this, and after I said it, I sank down on a log, with my face in my hands.

CHAPTER VIII

IF it were not for giving the reader such a mean deal, I would close this story right here, by saying, "THE END," and thus leave Sam and me facing slow starvation, as we were at the conclusion of the last chapter.

The reason I feel like dropping the whole business now is because I hate to recall what we went through in that lonely camp on the shore of Caribou Lake and how can I write about it, without recalling it? However, I realize that to bring a continued tale abruptly to an end before the last chapter is finished would be unjust to those who have followed it from the beginning. The gentle reader of a serial always wants to know whether the villain got it in the neck, and whether the hero led the heroine to the altar just before the curtain went down on the last act. For this reason I am going to make

a clean breast of what happened to Sam and me, no matter how distasteful it is to recollect the facts — I am going to tell the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth, if it takes the hide and hair both off.

After Sam had spilled all of his cartridges in the lake and after I had plunked my last "soft-nose" at the buck and missed, we were both so sore that we completely ignored each other's presence in camp for several hours. Sam would not speak to me and I was too stuffy to speak to him. We sat there before the camp fire with our faces in our hands and our pipes in our mouths, smoking like a couple of chimneys, but saying never a word.

Finally I got tired of this Quaker meeting business and determined I would go into the brush accompanied by my little .22 and with the few cartridges I had left, knock over a couple of spruce partridges for supper.

Without saying anything to Sam, I entered the tent, got the revolver and began to explore my duffle bag for cartridges. You know yourself, how hard it is to find anything

in a duffle bag. I drew a prize every time I plunged in my hand, but not what I was after. One grab would bring forth a wool sock, the next the mate to it, or a rifle cleaner, or a ball of twine, or something else I didn't want. At last I got mad and upturning the



There was a lot of cold shoulder in camp, yet nothing to eat. Figure it out.

blamed bag I emptied its contents on the ground and carefully went through everything.

No cartridges!

Then I sat down on the fir balsam bed and scratched my head until it ached. Finally after a lot of heavy thinking, I remembered

having left the few cartridges that were in the box on a stump at our last Chesuncook Lake camp, after I had been shooting at a mark. Then I put the things back into the bag and hated myself from the ground up. I didn't say anything about this to Sam, who had not known that I ever thought that I had some .22 cartridges left, because I didn't want to become any more unpopular with him than I already was.

When I came out of the tent Sam was washing the leg bone of a deer in the lake. Now, the prospect of something to eat helped me to perk up and forget my grouch — hunger is a great reducer of men to a common level.

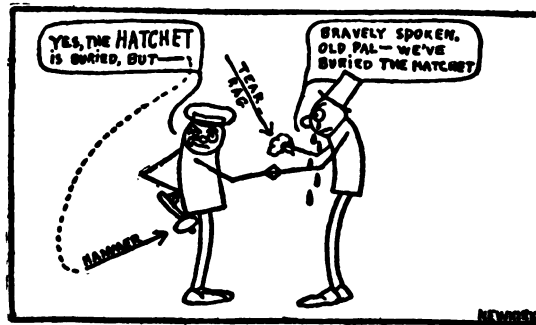
"Where did you pick up that ham bone?" says I to Sam, breaking the ice which had formed between us. I found Sam as ready to talk as I was — he was probably getting lonesome, too.

"This," says Sam, in a reconciled voice, "is the leg bone of that last deer we killed. We gnawed most of the meat from it before I threw it away and what was left the moose

birds and mice have cleaned up, but I guess we can make a stew from it."

If you could have seen that dry bone, you would have given Sam another guess.

"Sam," says I, kind of melted at the sight of the poor cuss washing off that miserable bone that I'd been ashamed to throw to a dog, "you and I are up against it good and



We buried the hatchet, but I thought I would hang onto the hammer.

hard, and if it is agreeable to you, let's pull together and let bygones be bygones."

"Bravely spoken, old pal," says Sam, holding out a smeared hand, which I grasped firmly. "We'll bury the hatchet and not

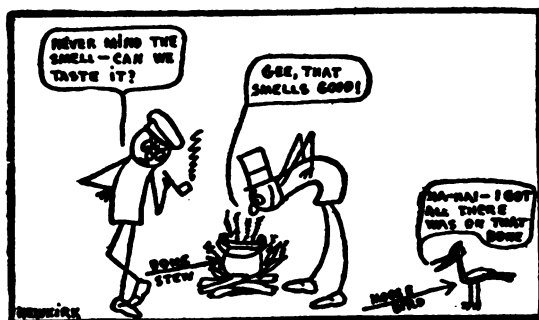
leave the handle of it sticking out either. We've both made mistakes."

"Yes, that's right," says I, "we've both made mistakes, but we will not talk about that any more. When you carelessly splashed the last of your cartridges into the lake, that was the biggest mistake that's been made since we started out, but we'll not dwell on that. You also made another mistake when you refused to take my suggestion to bring more grub on this trip, but we won't make any reference to that either."

"Look here," says Sam, who had just offered me his hand, "if you're going to forget everything, get busy at it and cut out the alphabetical list of blunders — you can't forget things if you always keep remembering them."

I didn't say any more because I didn't want to open up the breach between us again. I showed great patience and fortitude and strength of character by holding my tongue in order to keep peace in the family. Sam chopped the leg bone of the deer into pieces with the camp axe, dumped them into a

kettle, added some water, and salt, and pepper, then put the whole thing on to boil. Outside of salt and pepper, all we had left was baking powder, but of course we couldn't use that in a bone stew. Well, we boiled those bones and boiled them, then boiled them some more, until Sam finally announced that he thought the stew was done, so we sat



Recipe for bone-stew:—one dry bone and
four quarts of water.

down with the kettle between us and a tin cup and a spoon in hand.

"Which part of the roast do you prefer?" asks Sam in a jokey tone.

"If it is all the same to you," says I, try-

ing to be cheerful. "I will take a large portion of the white meat."

Then we fell to and helped ourselves. There are some stews with sufficient solid substances in them so that if you prod persistently with a fork long enough, you can spear a dumpling, or a potato, or a chunk of meat, but this stew we had was not that kind of a stew. If I had tried to find anything like that in this stew with a fork, I would be at it yet. We didn't eat this stew — we drank it. It was in fact a weak imitation of an almost-broth. At the first swallow I burned my mouth and throat all the way down. It was hot, but that's about all. To merely a hungry man it tasted like hot water, but a connoisseur might possibly have detected in it a far away meat flavor.

We cleaned up this stew together, which meant that we each absorbed about two quarts of it. Then we called it a square meal, piled some wood on the camp fire and lighted our pipes.

"How does the stew set?" says Sam.

"Well," says I, "I can't say that I feel

any particular distress after eating — I don't believe a man could eat enough of that stew to give him indigestion. By the way, are you going to boil those bones over for breakfast?"

"No," says Sam, "we'll have to get out and rustle for breakfast, just like the birds and other wild creatures do."

"If I was a bird," says I, "I certainly would spread my wings and beat it for home."

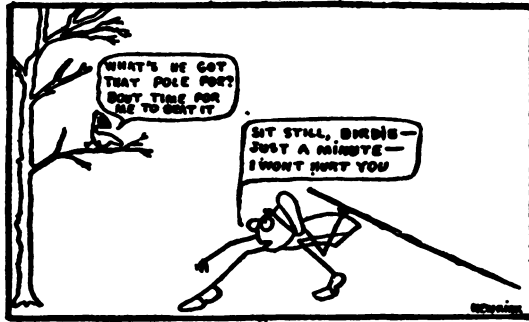
"Cheer up, Newt," says Sam; "our situation is not half as bad as it seems to be — nature will always give a man a living, if he has the courage to wrest it from her. After you get home, you will look back on this experience with pleasure and will rejoice that you triumphed when the odds were so against you."

"Sam," says I, "I wouldn't give you a plate of corn beef and cabbage this minute for all that kind of philosophy you have on tap."

After we had passed a melancholy evening talking about good things to eat, we went to

bed. I dreamed of sirloin steaks and hashed brown potatoes and apple pie and puddings, all night long.

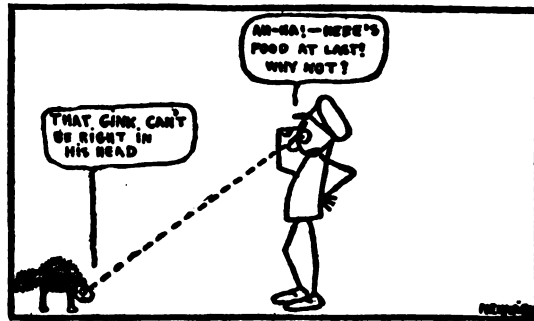
Next morning we pulled our belts one notch tighter for breakfast, then we each cut and trimmed a long slender pole and left camp in different directions in the hope that



I promised that bird everything if it would only sit still, but it would fly.

we could get close enough to a spruce partridge to knock it over. A spruce partridge is a very curious creature. When you have a gun and a lot of ammunition and are hunting for deer, they are so tame as to be almost annoying. Then they perch within arm's

length and sometimes you nearly have to kick them out of the trail. But when your cartridges are all gone and you are looking for a spruce partridge to save you from starving, it immediately becomes wary and elusive.



I never before believed that a porcupine could make my mouth water.

I jumped one into the lower limb of a tree, but as I crept up toward it to knock it off, it flew to another tree, and when I approached it again, it flew a second time. I guess I followed it for a quarter of a mile. Finally I got out of patience, threw my pole at it, broke the pole and frightened the partridge out of my neighborhood altogether.

Then I thrust my hands deep into my pockets and with my chin on my chest started back toward camp in a very peevish and petulant mood. I had gone but a little way until there ahead of me waddling clumsily along the trail in the same direction I was going, was an old porcupine, full of thorns. As I came up behind him, he turned his head and gave me a sour look and I was about to turn out and pass him by with contempt when all at once, I had a bright inspiration.

"What's the matter with porcupine for dinner to-night?" says I to myself as the porky and I stood there sizing each other up. I had heard somewhere that the Maine hedgehog is good eating when properly cooked and served, but when I heard that it didn't interest me very much, because then I had no idea that the time would ever come when a fat porcupine would make my mouth water. The situation now, however, was different — hunger will make any man change his view point about things to eat. An arctic explorer will, if he is driven to it, make a stew of a moose hide moccasin and

smack his lips over it. Of course Sam and I had not arrived at the moccasin stew stage, but nevertheless we were in the position where beggars should not be choosers. While the porcupine sat there gritting his teeth at me, trying to stare me out of countenance with his little beady black eyes, I snatched up a stone and with one smart wallop on his head put him out of business.

When I marched into camp lugging that hedgehog, Sam wanted to know what I was going to do with it.

"Eat it," says I. "What did you suppose — use it for a pin cushion?"

"You must be hungry," says Sam.

Then I gave Sam a fine line of talk on baked porcupine as an edible delicacy until I got him interested.

"Who's going to dress the critter?" he asked.

"I will," says I, "if you will hold him."

"Easy!" says Sam, but when we were ready to go to work Sam says, "What in thunderation will I hold him by! — he has more prickles than a thistle!" By doing

team work together, however, Sam and I at last managed to peel the pelt off. Once the knife slipped and I got a quill in my thumb, but the remarks I made on that occasion have no place in this chronicle.

When that "porky" was ready for the bake pan, he didn't look so bad to me.

"Looks like a cat," says Sam.

"Go ahead and yawp," says I, "you can't spoil my appetite."

We basted the creature with its own fat, sprinkled him with salt and pepper and after two hours pronounced him done to a turn. Then we served him between us and sat down to get busy. Sam began to gnaw away at a leg, but he didn't say anything. I took a hunk on my tin plate as big as a small roast of beef and began on it, but I didn't say anything either.

After a long silence Sam speaks up, "How do you like it, Newt?"

"Great," says I. "It tastes just like roast pork to me only it is more tender and juicy and has a better flavor. How do you like it?"

"Well," says Sam, "I'll be honest with you: I'd a good deal rather starve to death than eat it." Thereupon he slammed down his knife and fork, left the table and lighted his pipe to take the taste out of his mouth, but I waded right in and went after that porcupine like a starved Cuban.

To tell the honest truth it wasn't quite up to what I expected it would be as a table delicacy, but I didn't propose to admit that to Sam, after I had killed it and recommended it to him in such strong terms. Sam stood around, smoking and watching me eat and making remarks. He said he once saw a cat that was burned in a house destroyed by fire, that looked for all the world like that porcupine, and every little while he would ask me if I didn't want a second helping. I told him no, that while I dearly loved baked porcupine, I hoped I wasn't a hog.

It was not very long until I realized that I had helped myself to more porcupine than I could get away with — I had been chewing away half an hour and the big piece on my plate hadn't shrunk a bit that I could see.

When I took that chunk I made up my mind I would eat it all if it killed me and now I realized if I did eat it all, it would kill me. By and by Sam went down to the lake for a pail of water and while he was gone, I slipped what was left on my plate into the pocket of my hunting coat.

"Well, I see you've cleaned it up," says Sam, when he got back.

"Yes," says I. Then I tried to change the subject. A few minutes later I took off my coat to chop some wood, but when I went to hang it up to the limb of a tree, the limb broke, the coat fell and the chunk of roast porcupine rolled out of my pocket at Sam's feet.

As hungry as Sam was he hollered and yelled like an Indian, but I never cracked a smile — I told him I had put it in my pocket for cold lunch, but I couldn't make him believe that. We set what was left of the porcupine out in the open where the moose birds could get at it. The first one that came along, cocked his head on one side and looked at it suspiciously, then he took a peck

at it, made a wry face and flew off into the woods. I think he told all the other moose birds of the insult, because as long as that porcupine lay there, not a moose bird bothered it, and anything in the eating line that a moose bird will turn down must be pretty punk.

Ah, those were the unhappy days! After



I let on it was delicious, but just between you and me it was punk.

we had lost all our cartridges, I never saw so much big game in my life. The deer became so impudent that they would approach close to camp, size us up, and then bounce away, waving their white flags at every

jump. We saw two more bull moose, but all we could do was to raise our hats politely to them and pass on our way. One evening as we sat in camp, a cow moose nearly stepped on me. She came up so close that I was on the point of getting up and giving her my seat before the camp fire, when she turned and went slowly into the woods again. Ducks were very plentiful too — they swam along shore in front of the camp and quacked derisively at us. By hook and crook we managed to get just enough spruce partridges to exist on for six days, and when they became scarce and hard to capture, we had what Sam called a root stew. He said it was made from edible roots, which he had dug. They may have been edible all right, but we rolled and turned and twisted all night with a couple of painful stomach aches and after that we had no more root stew.

I had boasted that I would not be the first one to suggest breaking camp, but oh, how I hoped and prayed for Sam to do so! Finally on the day after the root stew experience, he says, "Well, Newt, don't you

think we'd better make a start toward civilization?"

"What's your hurry?" says I, "I just love this place and I hate to break away from it—I could stay here all winter and be happy and contented."



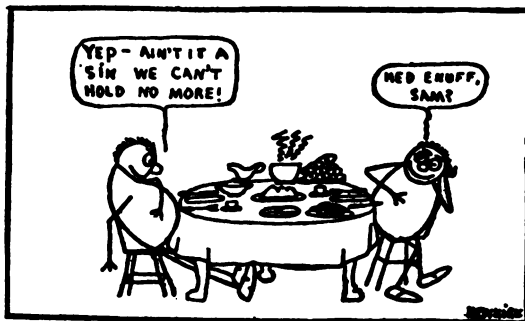
There ought to be a law making cow moose
go to bed at sundown.

Then I quaked in my boots for fear Sam would decide to stay a couple of weeks longer, but he didn't—he said we'd had a lovely time living back to nature, and he thought we'd better pull out, so pull out we did within a few hours and we didn't pull out any too quick for me.

I won't tell of the hardships of our trip from Caribou Lake through the thoroughfare and up Chesuncook Lake up to Chesuncook Village, because that would be too painful. The day we tried to go up Chesuncook there was a nasty northeast wind raking it from end to end and no galley-slaves ever worked harder than we did to creep painfully up along its shore in the teeth of the white-caps. When we reached the point known as Togue Ledge, and got the full force of the wind and water, for half an hour we dug our canoe blades into the waves but never budged the canoe an inch ahead. Then we dropped back to shore and lay down for an hour, entirely exhausted. By this time the wind had abated somewhat and we were able to negotiate the point and finally to arrive in safety at Chesuncook Village, from which point out to Northeast Carry, the going was comparatively easy.

At Chesuncook Village we stopped with Anse Smith, who runs the hotel there where we got our first square meal in many days. If I were to write a book I couldn't tell how

good that dinner tasted to Sam and me. We sat at the table about an hour and a half, and ate until we could hardly get up. Not only our stomachs were empty, but our legs



Look at that table full of good grub that we couldn't eat!

and arms also seemed to be hollow. We stayed with Anse two days to rest up and recuperate and with his cozy accommodations and his excellent grub we were soon convalescent and ready to resume our journey.

Here is a good place to say good-bye to the reader and in closing let me suggest that when anybody proposes to you a trip of "Back to Nature," have the courage to say "no!" with a capital "N."

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NOT TO SCALE

